1978

Midwest China Oral History Interviews

Ruth Gilbertson

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ORAL HISTORY ABSTRACT

BORN: June 13, 1897, near Atwater, Minnesota.

EARLY LIFE: education; called by the Lutheran United Mission Board, 1919, to teach at the American School-Kikungshan (ASK).

CHINA EXPERIENCES: trip to China; description of time spent in the International Hospital in Hankow; journey from Hankow to Kikungshan; memories of bandit activity; memories of General Feng Yu-hsiang; arrival at ASK; general description of living conditions and work at ASK; other schools in Kikungshan; memories of Agnes Kittelsby and other ASK faculty members; tragic moments at ASK; women's place in mission work; evacuating ASK, 1929; re-establishment of ASK at Kuling; memories of Chiang Kai-shek; closing of ASK, 1941; description of living conditions in the Philippines while interned by the Japanese during WWII; released, 1945; trip to China to re-open ASK in Sinyang, 1946; general description of ASK in Sinyang.

INTERVIEWER: Charlotte Martinson Gronseth

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+ Complementary archival and museum material from Ruth Gilbertson is also housed in the Midwest China Oral History, Archives and Museum Collection.

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: First of all I would like to ask when you were born and where you were born.

GILBERTSON: I was born in Minnesota, June 13, 1897. I am now 81, almost 82. My childhood was spent on a farm outside of Atwater. I lived on a farm two and a half miles from the school. Two miles from town, but the school was on the other side. So it was walking two and a half miles much of the time.

I: What influences were there in your life towards your decision to become a missionary? How did you first become interested in China or in missionary work?

GILBERTSON: I wasn't more interested in China, I don't think, than in any other country, but when I was just a small child, I had a very serious case of scarlet fever. One night when the doctor didn't expect me to be living by morning, my mother and my father's mother, who was living with us, prayed desperately that if my life was spared that they would do what they could to help me become a missionary. Of course, they had always had strong interest in missions. So from early childhood I sensed their great interest. Grandmother would often sit reading aloud as my mother was busy at her sewing or whatever work she was doing, and they would discuss the work of our missionaries, particularly those of India and Madagascar. So the names of Boreson and Skrefsrud

and Tou are those I especially remember. I suppose I must have heard something about Netland and Ronning and Landahl and Nelson because we had the Kinamissionieren, too. Somehow I don't recall so much about China as the other countries. Grandmother had never learned English and didn't speak English. We spoke in Norwegian to her always, and I learned Norwegian well and enjoyed to read it. So I often read aloud to members of the family from The Scandinavian which had many very interesting stories, continued stories.

I: Was Scandinavian a church publication?

GILBERTSON: No, it wasn't. I think it was published in Chicago, but it was a very well-known one, and I think they had items, too, on the church.

My mother and my grandmother must have often wondered what my interest in missions was. But they never discussed the matter with me. Nor do I remember their telling me about the fever and their prayers that night. I knew it, but they didn't discuss it with me, and I think it was a good idea. They never urged me, but they provided the atmosphere for the interest in missions. They must have prayed much that their wishes would be fulfilled. And nothing was spared in my education, even though my mother was poorly. I could very well have stayed home and helped with the work. Yet I was always given the opportunity to go to col-

lege at St. Olaf, and others would come in to help. In fact, my mother wanted me to attend Oak Grove Seminary when I was to go to high school, but I said, "Oh, no, I don't want to go away from home at such an early age." Then Oak Grove was just a girls' school. We had as our pastor Olaf Norlie, a very mission-minded man, so I am sure he had a part, too, in praying for us. Three girls from our congregation became missionaries.

I: Oh, were you all about the same age?

GILBERTSON: The other girls were a little older than I was, but I was the first one to go to the field. I went almost directly after college, but the other two were in the service during WWI. After they came back from the service, then I heard they were interested in going, too. The following year after I had gone, Clara Peterson came. Arna Quello's father was rather opposed to her going, so she was delayed for another year. We three all went to China. We were from the same congregation and had been very good friends from childhood. I am sure that Dr. Norlie was very happy that we went to the field, though he was not our pastor at that time.

I: Did you go to St. Olaf right after high school?

GILBERTSON: Yes, the following fall in 1915. I graduated

in 1919.

I: What did you study when you were at St. Olaf? What was your major?

GILBERTSON: My major was English and education, but I also had Latin. Altogether I had six years of studying Latin. Then I taught those four years of Latin when I was at the American School Kikungshan, so that was convenient that I had had it. Miss Kittelsby was the Latin teacher. In fact, she was a German teacher, too. When she went on furlough I took over some of that work. I also taught German although I had had only two years of it. But I lived in a German community. Not that I ever spoke it, but I knew quite a bit about German people and so had a feel for the language.

I: When you were studying at St. Olaf, were you planning on mission work?

GILBERTSON: Oh, yes. Certainly. I was always with a group that was interested in missions. We had the Student Volunteers at that time, but I never joined the Student Volunteer Movement until I was a senior. Joining that movement helped one to definitely make plans for the future, but somehow I did hold off. I think in part that I was not completely ready to know that plans were made for me.

I was independent and perhaps wasn't so ready always to give in to having my future set. But I had always been very interested in our mission groups and had always attended them. Then there came the time when I just had to decide or else I wouldn't be doing the Lord's will.

I: Was there any one missionary speaker that impressed you most, influenced you?

GILBERTSON: Yes, there was. I think the first year that I was at St. Olaf, Dr. Paul Harrison from Arabia spoke. I believe he was a Presbyterian who had a great influence on me--an influence that I felt. He was a medical doctor and spoke of the medical work and how much women nurses could do for the native people. I thought, that's what I want to do! I wrote home and said I wanted to finish college, but I would take nurses' training afterwards. I didn't get to do that because I was called to take the place of a lady teacher who was ill. So I went to China shortly after I graduated from college.

I: Where was this that you went to teach?

GILBERTSON: It was at Kikungshan, the American School in Honan. It's about 600 miles inland from Shanghai by steamer and then about 125 miles north on the railroad.

I: What year was it that you went to Kikung?

GILBERTSON: 1920. I graduated in 1919. I only taught that fall. When I had written to the mission board, I thought, "If I am going, I will at least go within the next 10 years." I had thought that because there were about 25 applicants already. I decided I'd better see that I get my name in. I was most surprised when I found out that they were expecting me to go that very year, although I hadn't gotten the word personally. I was teaching at Pleasant View Lutheran College in Illinois. They were trying to urge me to stay and not go home for Christmas. When I got to Minneapolis, I found out that the mission board did have passage for me although I think it was for anyone that they might be able to send at the time because the need at the school was so great. I met Daniel Nelson, Sr., when I was in Minneapolis. He said, "Oh, they have passage for you for China." And I said, "Oh, I haven't heard anything about that." And so he said, "I'll go with you tomorrow morning to see the secretary, Rev. H.M. Saterlie, and find out about that." So I went with him the next morning, and they had passage on a ship for February. So I left at that time.

I: So your first teaching position was in Illinois, then, at this Lutheran College.

GILBERTSON: Yes. That was the first time I had been out

of the state. I left Pleasant View College because I thought they could always secure teachers here in this country while it was harder for them to fill those places out in China.

I: How did you get to know the Netlands?

GILBERTSON: Amanda was at St. Olaf at the time I was and so were Elias and Lydia Kristensen and Nora Nelson. I knew those young people and knew they were graduates from the American School. But it never occurred to me that I would be going to teach there because I always thought that it was the Chinese people I wanted to work with. I never got that opportunity because I was needed at the school.

I: Did you ever long for the opportunity to go into work directly with Chinese people?

GILBERTSON: Yes, I did. When I was on furlough, I would inquire of the mission secretary about studying Chinese. The response was always, "Well, if they don't need you..." But I never got the permission. I was always needed at ASK. Many feel that if they are going to teach American children in a foreign country, they could just as well stay home and teach. The children of the missionaries have to be taught, too. If the families are going to be together, they have to have teachers for the children.

I: Since you had come to know these St. Olaf students who had been to ASK, had you gotten a particular interest in China at that time?

GILBERTSON: Oh, I think so. Mrs. Oline Netland lived there, too, in Northfield while Amanda was attending St. Olaf. And she often invited us to her home.

I: What particularly interested you about China?

GILBERTSON: I don't know. I knew that they were heathen people, and that the gospel should be brought to them. If they were going to hear, we would have to go, be obedient to the Lord's command, "Go ye."

I: If you were called at Christmas time and you left in February, you didn't have much chance to prepare.

GILBERTSON: No, and I couldn't go home to Atwater either. My sister who lived on the farm at that time with her husband had contracted flu. I was not permitted by our secretary to go home at that time. He said that I must wait a little. So I did. But I did get a few days there before I left. My father, though, was not very keen about my going. I was the youngest in the family. So it was hard for him. My mother was in California at the time, the first time she had gone there because of the asthmatic condition that she had. She was getting along so much

better there. My father had never wanted to travel much, and so he didn't want to go. I saw my mother in California just before I sailed. That very same day that I sailed my mother returned to Minnesota because my sister was so ill with flu. But she recovered.

I: When you left, were there a number of other missionaries of your church body on the ship?

GILBERTSON: Only Mrs. Netland.

I: Just the two of you. Who were the other passengers? Were they missionaries from other boards?

GILBERTSON: Oh, yes, there were. And there were also business people that I got acquainted with. To me it didn't matter if they were missionaries or business people. We were all very friendly. And I was never seasick at any time in my journey. I could thoroughly enjoy the sea voyage.

I: Did you talk much about China on the trip?

GILBERTSON: I don't think we did much. I remember people thinking that I was rather young to be going so far. Those were days when people weren't traveling as they are now. Fellow passengers were surprised that I was going to be gone for a term.

I: I thought it was very interesting that at Yokohama you were entertained at the home of the president of the Japan-

ese steamship company, the Toyo Kisheu Kaisha.

GILBERTSON: Our ship was the Shinyo Maru. I suppose that they entertained every group that came on a Japanese ship. It was a beautiful home. We were taken all through it and served Japanese food. It was for everyone on the ship. And it was very delightful. I had never seen a Japanese home, of course, before. Those lovely paintings that one sees and the screens that they have separating their rooms--beautiful. It was in the afternoon, a sort of tea, but there was quite a little Japanese food served.

I: I am sure they had their lovely Japanese gardens and wore the traditional Japanese clothes, the long gowns?

GILBERTSON: The Japanese in 1920 wore the long gowns because people weren't dressing in American clothes in Japan. Nor in China for that matter.

I: Then at Kobe you changed to a Canadian line, the Monteage?

GILBERTSON: Yes, when our ship was in Japan, there was a student uprising by the Chinese young people in Shanghai so that the ship didn't dare make the voyage to Shanghai. We had to transfer ships. That wasn't planned before. We knew nothing about that when we boarded the ship.

I: You had expected to take the Japanese liner all the way to Shanghai?

GILBERTSON: Yes, so we had to stay a few days in Kobe. That's when I got typhoid fever. I don't know if it was a result of the stay or how I contracted it, but I started to feel a severe headache and was uncomfortable even before getting to Shanghai. In fact, we had 1500 coolies aboard our ship who disembarked at Tsingtao. And they were herded on the ship. I say hearded because it was just as if they were cattle. They would come out for a short time for fresh air. They were in the hold of the ship. Then, as they marched down the gangplank, each one was given a loaf of bread and five dollars, and then they were to find their way home. They carried very little. Some of them had knapsacks, but others would have a bird cage possibly. They seemed to be very fond of the birds. These were coolies who had been working in France during the war.

I: When you disembarked at Shanghai, what were your first impressions there?

GILBERTSON: There was such a crowd of people as we got off the steamer that I was just almost afraid to walk. We couldn't get through the crowd to get to a ricksha. A ricksha, I suppose, is what we took to go to the mission home. And I was rather fearful.

I: You weren't feeling well either having already contracted typhoid.

GILBERTSON: No, that's right. I still had a 600-mile tour to Hankow and then that was not my destination. I knew if I could only get to Hankow, I could get to a hospital there. Of course, I could have stayed in Shanghai, but I didn't want to be so far from my destination. And so I tried not to let it be known that I wasn't well. I found it very difficult to eat anything. I ate some crackers--that's about all--and hoped they wouldn't put me off the ship before I would get to Hankow, a four-days' journey.

I: Was it a rather nice river boat you were on?

GILBERTSON: Oh, yes, yes. Very nice, a fine boat.

I: Did you have any strong impressions of contrast between Japan and Shanghai when you arrived, or were you feeling too ill to notice?

GILBERTSON: I think Japan was crowded, too, but it didn't seem that I felt as closed-in as I did in China. There seemed to be so much yelling, different ones so eager that we should take this one's ricksha rather than another one and so much complication.

I: When you arrived in Hankow you were put immediately into the International Hospital?

GILBERTSON: Oh, yes. There was a suggestion that I stay at the mission home. Of course, I wasn't told what trouble I had. I didn't know that I had typhoid fever at that time. A couple of nurses on the ocean steamer had said they thought that that was most likely what I had. But oh, I couldn't think of staying anywhere or being anywhere other than in a hospital. I was so ready for a hospital. I couldn't wait to get there. And I had a very fine doctor, a Scotch doctor. Dr. Aird, a very fine Christian man.

I: Do you know anything about the history of this hospital--who founded it, how it was established?

GILBERTSON: Yes, it was a Catholic hospital. It was called the International Hospital. There were nurses from every country or many of the countries in Europe. They were nuns. I hadn't ever met with any nuns before wearing those black garments that they used to always wear. They looked as though they had about three or four layers underneath, and their skirts spread out so far. But they were very, very kind and never spoke about their religion to me. They were so busy about doing this or that for their church or for their Catholic patients, it seemed. There was one French nun who was my nurse. I didn't know any French. Communication had to be my motions, pretty much.

I: Do you remember if these Catholics took regular furloughs the way we did?

GILBERTSON: No, they came to China to stay the rest of their lives. They didn't have furloughs. They gave up their family relations when they moved to China.

I: That was difficult!

GILBERTSON: Yes, they had to sacrifice something to come.

I: Who were mainly the patients at International Hospital? Were they mostly Chinese?

GILBERTSON: Yes, they were.

I: And whatever foreigners would be coming out?

GILBERTSON: Oh, I suppose there were some, too. I didn't see so much of the patients. I didn't in the beginning at all. It was three weeks or more before I was very much in touch with anyone or anything because I had been ill so long that it took a long time to recover. 38 days I was in the hospital. But they had beautiful gardens outside the hospital--very attractive flower beds and attractive pergolas in which to sit and to enjoy the out-of-doors. Then later they would take me out in a chair, and I would sit under one of those pergolas. And besides I had a verandah outside my room, too. There was one outside of every room. So they would carry my bed out there. There were servants. I had three boys, in fact, that worked there in the room.

One swept, and one brought my meal, and I don't know what else. I know there were three.

I: Was there quite a distinction in rank between them or not?

GILBERTSON: Oh, no. I don't think so, no. We called all three "boys." If one was called "cook," he would have more status.

I: Did you have quite a few visitors? It must have been a lonely time away from your home in a foreign country.

GILBERTSON: Well, yes, in a way. But there were Missouri Synod Lutheran missionaries stationed in Hankow, Rev. and Mrs. Lawrence Meier and Agnes Arndt. But being that they were German, too, it was not so easy for them to appear after the First World War. But they did finally come. There were other visitors, also. A German business family, the Oho Kleins, was living there, and they came to visit me. And some of our missionaries. The matron Belle Richardson from ASK came down one time and teachers from ASK--Agnes Kittelsby and Andrew Burgess. They would sometimes bring me flowers the children had picked. And I would get different things. It wasn't too bad, though. I guess I was pretty homesick. Now after reading the letters Mother had kept from that time I realize that I was really very depen-

dent on my letters from home. The girls who were with me from our congregation said, too, "You were pretty lonely when you were first out."

I: Did the children from the school send letters to you or notes or anything?

GILBERTSON: Oh, yes, yes. They all wrote letters. Whoever knows Agnes Kittelsby knows that she would take care of that and see that everything was done for me. One little boy, Nathanael M. Fedde, about eight years old, sent me a letter that had a Bible passage from the Old Testament, from Joshua: "Fear not, be not dismayed." That kind of amused me that that little boy gave me that passage! I don't know how he had found it or who had given it to him.

I: Did you have any chance while you were recovering to pick up a little Chinese?

GILBERTSON: I was trying to. There was a Chinese amah who also helped me besides these three boys. She couldn't speak English, so we would try by pointing to things to get the names. We had something of an exchange going on--Chinese for English.

I: Then when you were ready to leave the hospital, did you go directly to Kikungshan?

GILBERTSON: No, Mrs. Erik Sovik, who had been to see me a few times, invited me to come out to stay with her family. They lived just 10 miles from Hankow, at the seminary at Shekow. In fact, I couldn't have made the trip to Kikungshan. I was there for two weeks in their home, I think. Dr. Erik was a professor at the seminary.

I: Were you accompanied on the train when you did go to Kikungshan?

GILBERTSON: Yes, yes, Mrs. Sovik was going up for the summer. By this time it was already May. She was traveling with all her baggage, with several baskets. That's often the way we traveled in China in those days. We piled everything in big large baskets or else wrapped it up in an oil cloth, tarpaulin. We didn't have many suitcases or anything like that. The cow came along, too, this time, so that they could continue getting milk from their own cow. The trains in China were different. They had open freight cars so that it was possible to bring the cow. The boy who was in charge of the cow would ride along with the animal. There weren't too many cows out there. A missionary (not from our mission) had made it a point to have cows brought out to China. The milkers lived down in the valley at Kikung and would come up with the milk. Most people were still dependent on tinned milk at this time.

I: Did they have different classes on that train?

GILBERTSON: Oh, yes. I don't suppose all the trains had first, second and third class, but there were the classes. The trains were from Belgium. They were different from ours. These compartments would have sleeping places for four people, i.e., just benches on which you could lie down or sit up as you please. In first class there might have been a little upholstery on the benches.

I: Missionaries usually traveled first class?

GILBERTSON: Oh, no, never. It would be second or third. We even traveled on any kind of a car that we could get on. We carried a tarpaulin with us always so that we could spread it out to sit on. We would spread it out when we had to get into a coal car. If there wasn't coal, it might be soiled, so we would protect ourselves. And we could look at the stars in these open cars. One time when there was famine and there were so many people riding on the top of the cars, one of our missionaries saw one car that didn't have anyone on the top. So he thought, "Well, this is strange." So as he was going to get into that car, he found that there were pigs that were in that car, so he was very quick to get out of there.

I: Traveling conditions in China really were varied and often difficult, I am sure.

GILBERTSON: Yes. Sometimes we had quite good service if there weren't "normal" conditions. Normal conditions were usually warlike because there were both civil and military governors. And military governors would always have a large number of troops. They were always trying to get more and so they would fight each other in the different provinces and that would cause a lot of transportation of troops. At such times, we would just have to board any kind of car, not a troop train; fortunately, we weren't allowed on troop trains. But the other trains, too, would be heavily loaded because there weren't so many in service. Yet at other times, we would have quite comfortable trains. Of course, you could talk about a hard bench to sit on, but we were glad for that.

I: Did you ever get very close to the conflicts among the governors?

GILBERTSON: Yes, we did. That first summer I didn't get a letter from home for about six weeks. The mail had to be carried overland finally because there were no trains running, but troop trains.

I: So which port would it be that the letter would have come from?

GILBERTSON: Oh, I heard that they came from North China

at that time. That was very distressing. I always looked for my letters from home. We heard very many different reports at such times about what general was more victorious and then another one. This was very strange to me to hear about all that, but that was very common. Later it didn't bother me as much. Yet, of course, it was a very cheerless condition.

And sometimes when there were also hoards of robbers traveling on the countryside, we would have to leave our destination. During the time that I was there, we were away from home about the same amount of time that we were on Kikungshan. We were always having school, whether it was on a stairway or wherever it could be. We wouldn't miss having our classes. I think it was in 1924 that our Lutheran Mission Home and Agency was built in Hankow. Then we did have a little more space to occupy. Otherwise, it was usually Shekow where the seminary was. We would have classes in the seminary building and stay in homes of the professors.

I: It sounds as if it was almost the normal procedure to be fleeing.

GILBERTSON: Yes, that's right. The first term two of our missionaries were taken by robbers at the Chengyang station--Rev. Einar Borg-Breen and Rev. George Holm. Then later the little boy, a four year old, was taken. Rolf Borg-Breen was not taken with his father; the father, Einar, had been taken first. And then the goat man (since the mission-

aries had goats they had a man taking care of them) offered to go with the little boy. The goatman was with Rolf all the time that he was held for two weeks by the robbers. At that time I lived in Shekow with the Erik Soviks, where Mrs. Clara Borg-Breen and her two other children also lived. There was great rejoicing when Rolf finally came. But his father wasn't released that soon. We had to wait longer for him.

I: Do you remember the names of any of these generals? I suppose these names all sounded very strange to you when you first arrived without any training or language.

GILBERTSON: Yes. I know General Wu Pei-fu was one that seemed to have many of the troops, the largest number, I should say. But General Feng Yu-hsiang was the "Christian General." He was located at Sinyang and had a large number of Christian troops. One time we made a special trip to Sinyang from ASK to see the baptism of 900 Chinese soliders. This was a distance of about 25 miles. We went out to their camp early in the morning; 5:00 I guess the service started. It was of interest to see the procedure and the concerns that the general had for each person that was being baptized. He moved along and made a few remarks to the different soldiers as they were baptized. And then we had breakfast after that, rather a late breakfast because this took a long time. There were 900 to be baptized. But we were served in an

Army tent, guests of the general.

I: Who did the baptizing? Or were there a number of pastors?

GILBERTSON: Yes, Chinese pastors.

I: How many Americans were there, like from ASK? Did all the teachers, a number of the teachers go down for this?

GILBERTSON: I don't suppose more than two or three of us went down. Someone always had to be home to look after the children.

I: So that it was rather an intimate group that was served by General Feng.

GILBERTSON: The missionaries who worked in Sinyang were there, also. There might have been others from elsewhere, too.

I: But it was quite an impressive thing.

GILBERTSON: Yes, it surely was. Then later we were at Kioshan to spend Christmas. There General Feng also had a large number of troops, and some of those were Christian. He was the only general who was known to have Christian soldiers. His wife and three little children were with him. I remember her very well, a charming, plainly dressed woman.

I: Do you know anything about the feelings about the Chinese towards him?

GILBERTSON: I think he commanded a great deal of respect.

I: Do you know how this compared with someone like Wu Pei-fu or some of the others?

GILBERTSON: I don't know really how much they thought of them. Feng's troops would not loot as much as the others did. You could notice the difference. You could tell Feng was in the immediate vicinity or whether some other general was in charge.

I: With the looting that usually went on during this war, it must have been quite a frightening thing for them when the people would hear that they were coming.

GILBERTSON: I suppose the other generals tried to control that, too, but I am sure that it was rather difficult if they were not Christian.

I: When you arrived in Kikung, this was in May. What was your reception like?

GILBERTSON: Not all the children could come down to the station. This was a mountain resort, about 1500 feet above the sea level. The younger children and the girls, I think, had to remain farther up the mountain and appeared singing

as we came along. But the Boy Scouts were at the train, lined up along the train by Andrew Burgess, who was their scout master. Andrew had been my classmate at St. Olaf. I didn't know what I should do when I got off the train, how I should act. I had never been met by Boy Scouts before! And then the chair that I was to be carried in was decorated with flowers. Flowers are very profuse in the valley. Often the brides' chairs were decorated in this manner, so perhaps some thought this was a bride coming off the train!

I: The Chinese must have been quite interested when they saw this grand welcome.

GILBERTSON: There were always crowds around at that time, at least when there was a foreigner around. To see someone with very light hair was still strange to them.

I: When you got to the top of the hill then, the top of Kikungshan, what were your impressions there? Was there a feeling of happiness or did you suddenly feel lonely? I was wondering what it would be like?

GILBERTSON: Oh, I don't suppose I could have been lonely then. Everyone was so friendly, and I had such a wonderful reception. A many-course meal was served because this was a celebration. Miss Belle Richardson was the matron, and many times we thought she served more than was necessary,

but she enjoyed doing it. She had prepared a real feast for us.

I: Miss Belle Richardson was the matron and Miss Agnes Kittelsby was the principal?

GILBERTSON: Yes.

I: Do you remember who some of the other teachers were during that time?

GILBERTSON: We didn't have a nurse then. The nurse came in the fall of the year that I came out. That was Sister Lillian Groh, a deaconess. And Miss Sophie Malmin also came at that same time. But Grace Soderberg was the one who had to return home--I was replacing her. Others had to substitute while I was ill, so that was bad. Girls who had graduated the previous year took on work in the grades. That same fall we had two new teachers. They were from the Augustana Synod--Miss Anna Johnson and Miss Ruth Nystrom came at that time. We started to get organized.

As I said, Andrew Burgess was there in charge of the boys. But we had no pastor. We had to depend upon visiting fathers for our services, or else a pastor from the Swedish school conducted our services. The Swedish School students would come over to our school because we had the largest space for a congregation.

I: Were the services conducted in Swedish, then, or in English?

GILBERTSON: He spoke English very well, and the students had all studied English.

I: Was there much communication besides the services between the American School and the Swedish school?

GILBERTSON: There was some in gymnastics. I don't know whether we really had too much communication in the beginning when I first was there, but I think there was a little more that developed. We played some basketball. We would be invited to the school and royally entertained. We would have programs and many goodies afterwards.

I: How did the two schools compare in size?

GILBERTSON: Their school property was smaller than ours. They didn't have as many students as we had. Our numbers varied, but between 60 and 70 at that time. There was a time when some of the mothers had to be on the mountain because of the dangerous situations at the stations. Then we would have more children because the first and second graders would be there. Ordinarily their mothers would teach them at home. At those times we might have over 100 or 125. That was the most.

I: Mothers could really take quite a role in ASK,because didn't they substitute if a new teacher came late or something? They would draw mothers from the stations?

GILBERTSON: Yes, that is what happened. The father would have to get along at the station alone.

I: There were other American schools in China also. How many would you say would be comparable to ASK?

GILBERTSON: I better not say too much about that, but I think at some of the other schools, especially at Shanghai, they had quite a conglomeration of students. Many of the Shanghai American School students' parents were business people while ours was definitely a school for the missionaries' children, although we had one or two students at different times whose parents were not necessarily with the mission. We had children from many missions that were rather small. These missions couldn't afford to have a school for a few children, and they couldn't have the teaching standards that we had. We followed the Minnesota curriculum, and received the examinations they gave at the end of the year at that time.

I: The Kuling American School was quite a bit larger than ASK, wasn't it?

GILBERTSON: Yes, I think it was.

I: Did that include quite a few who were not missionary children?

GILBERTSON: There were mostly missionary children. But they had others, too. They were located on Kuling, and we spent three years on Kuling from 1931-1934. We had already gone to Hankow because of the Communist uprising at that time. In the meantime when the Yangtze flooded and the dams broke, we couldn't have the location that we had planned on across the river from Hankow at Wuchang and had to look for another place. So we did go to Kuling at that time and were very fortunate in occupying the British school. The British had closed the school in 1927 because the Communists were strong during the 20s. Many missionaries left their work and came back to the States at that time. And the British never opened their school again while we were in China. We could rent that property, and that was very fine. But when we first came up to Kuling, we had to look for any place and get along as best we could in summer homes. And we realized that this was our opportunity to occupy this school property.

I: For a moment I'll come back again to when you first arrived at Kikung. You mentioned in one of your letters about the beautiful location and all the flowers and so on. I was wondering if you could describe it.

GILBERTSON: That was one of the joys of the place, going on hikes, especially in the springtime and gathering all

those lovely flowers--the wisteria and the lilacs and the lilies and the azaleas, white flowers that looked like orange blossoms. It was a delight to come back to school with all these flowers. And then to enjoy the sight of these azaleas that covered the mountainside as we looked across to other ridges; the ridges were just red with the beautiful color of flowers. And then we would see the white areas where these other flowers were. And wisteria was a new flower to me besides the azaleas. Wisteria grew wild too, lovely clusters, like grapes. And there were always brooks babbling along, too. And birds that we enjoyed. So hiking was fun. Sometimes it was a bit strenuous in the mountains, and the young boys would often help these older teachers to do some of the climbing.

I: It really sounds beautiful. Was it damp there so that you would have lots of mist or rain or was it quite sunny most of the time?

GILBERTSON: We had a great deal of mist in the morning. We were above the clouds often. But the fog would disappear after a while. But because of that, it was difficult with our clothing, too. Our shoes would get moldy, and our clothes would have to be aired often. Bedding was aired every weekend. The children had to take their bedding out and hang it out to air. So that was quite a procedure to be in charge of. Not only were we teachers, but we lived

in the dormitories with the children and supervised this. We supervised their going to bed and getting their faces properly washed. It was fun, though, to hear their prayers. One little girl could continue for a long time if we let her with a prayer about almost anything.

I: That must have been quite a challenge to be both a teacher and a mother to all these children.

GILBERTSON: Most of these children had silk worms, and one girl would like to have a little worm on her nose when she would go to sleep. We would have to check again to make sure she hadn't gone to sleep with a worm on her face.

I: That's cute. I suppose you kissed them good night, too, and everything.

GILBERTSON: Yes.

I: I was wondering what some of the main adjustments were that you had to make in your new living situation now on Kikung. You mentioned some of them, like having to be both a teacher and a mother. And then, of course, entirely new surroundings that you had. What about, for example, money, adjusting to the new financial situation?

GILBERTSON: When I first came there, the American dollar was not worth the Chinese dollar. I think the dollar was about 94 cents in value. But then I guess it wasn't too

long before it had a greater value. During the time after the war--the Japanese War--then we talked in thousands and hundred thousands because Chinese money had little value. We used the copper coins so much. We didn't use dollars so much as the copper coin. And there were 20 cent pieces. Some had full value, and some didn't, depending on the inscription on it. The copper coins were large, and they had different values, too, according to their size. Some were larger than others, and they would have the greater value. The money was heavy to carry.

I: What about the living? Did you live in the dormitory or did you live in a house?

GILBERTSON: The first year I lived in a house with five girls. I didn't know Chinese, the Chinese language, and to communicate with two Chinese servants was difficult. Our "boy," as we called him, who did the cleaning, made fires because we just had stoves, cleaned the lamps and lanterns and saw that everything was in order, had quite a time understanding me. He would stop and ask whoever was going by if they could tell him what I wanted.

I: So you had many different interpreters.

GILBERTSON: Yes, Cora Martinson was one of the faithful ones. She occasionally spent the night with me, too, and would tell me the most hair-raising stories. And there

was a path that went by my bedroom window that the Chinese would take. I would hear someone pass, and it would frighten me. I was afraid at first. I soon overcame that fear. Once afterwards I was the only foreigner in that part of the city when we were in Sinyang, at the West Gate. Really, the cook, I think, spent the night awake because he was fearful of someone coming to steal money because there was quite a bit on hand. This was in 1946 when Edgar Sovik was renovating the school buildings of the former Chinese Boys' School which had stood vacant for years, but occasionally was occupied by soldiers who cooked on charcoal fires right on the floors.

I: Why were you alone?

GILBERTSON: Edgar and Gertrude Sovik made an important trip to the mountain, so I was holding down the place that night. We couldn't be on the mountain. We had to be at Sinyang. We didn't have coal for our furnace. We had a furnace at the mountain school at that time, but we didn't know what kind of condition it was in after eight years away from the school. We had to be on the plains, as we called it, because it was warm there, and we wouldn't need to have fuel. (But we did have snow there, too, so it wasn't always warm.) But we could burn wood, too. So we settled at Sinyang, and Edgar Sovik took charge.

During the war with the Japanese the buildings had been occupied by soldiers. So the buildings were in very bad shape. "Oh," I said, "I don't know how you can put these back into shape." Edgar Sovik had much courage and set up a carpenter shop in what was the former chapel in the boys' school. All the logs were brought in from the street, and the logs were sawed by hand by the Chinese carpenters. The planks were cleaned and the boards prepared for the floors. The floors had to be re-laid, and the furniture made. After a couple of our buildings were put into shape so that we could live in them, then we got along with very little furniture for a long time. We would perhaps have our table out on the porch and have class there and then move it in when we were going to eat!

I: When you first came to Kikung, what did you do for furniture? Did you have to order that made then, too, or was it provided for you?

GILBERTSON: Oh, yes. We had our own furniture in the dormitory. And I got a bed from Hankow. Two teachers went down one time and bought me a very fine Simmons bed with a good mattress. I was so thankful for a good bed. But our furniture was made right there, painted white. Our furniture included a wash-stand, chairs, and a library table with spaces on the sides for our books.

I: You had no running water in China, did you?

GILBERTSON: No. That was quite a job for our servants to carry all the water. We had a second floor and third floor in the dormitory. Yes, that was in the dormitory where classes were. We didn't have a classroom building, so a couple of rooms were used for classes. I don't know how we could get along with that little space. We did have an assembly room, and I suppose then we had classes there, too. And the boys were on the second floor, and the girls were on the third floor. There was a bathroom for everybody on the floor. We had a counter in the bathroom so that each one had his or her basin. A servant would carry up warm water in the evening so that the children could get somewhat properly washed. On Saturdays was bath day.

I: That must have been quite an ordeal!

GILBERTSON: Yes, it was. We had to supervise.

I: So all the hot water had to be brought and carried up then. I suppose the servant used a pole across his shoulder with two pails.

GILBERTSON: Yes, he did. They had two pails and they had huge "kangs" outside that held the water. They had boilers, what we called boilers, for heating the water.

Our place was pretty primitive, but then we did get electric lights. They had installed the electric lights the year that I came. Previous to that they were using lamps, and you know what a concern that would be with lamps in the childrens' rooms. And also the stoves. They didn't have a central heating plant at first. So Miss Kittelsby certainly had something to contend with. She was the principal there for the first years. She came to the school in 1914 and passed away in 1925. She had her furlough in 1921-1922, and she didn't live long after she came back. She had such dreadful heachaches.

I: What do you remember about Miss Kittelsby? I hear so much about her.

GILBERTSON: Yes, yes, the children were very fond of her. She was strict, but they had very much respect for her. She was strict, but at the same time she had such compassion for the children. She was dignified, and she had great mental ability. She taught piano from the very beginning and that was just extra hours. I started that also. I really wasn't a piano teacher, but I had had piano instruction all through college and from childhood. I had learned to play the pipe organ, too. We had no pipe organ over there! Miss Kittelsby, who had been a college teacher at St. Olaf, had given up her work to go out to teach the

missionaries' children and had to adapt herself to teaching many different subjects. When we lived with the children, we supervised them at the table and were in charge of the devotional period and the games--we always had circle games Friday night. When I came, I was just out of college and I was ready to have a good time with the children. Yet, oftentimes I didn't look forward to it, and I would have liked to have done something else besides going down in the gym and playing with them. But it was fun.

TAPE TWO-SIDE ONE

I: At ASK, what grades and subjects did you teach?

GILBERTSON: I had always taught the high school English. I guess I might have taught any one of the classes there, but not all at the same time. I also taught the four years of Latin at one time when Miss Kittelsby was gone on furlough. I taught German, and I only had three years of German previously. I taught even cooking. I had had cooking in high school, not at college, but I could adapt myself to that. And Chinese history and Chinese geography that I had never studied before, and had eleven brilliant students! All of them really were brilliant in that class. Oh, yes, and math. I taught them math. In fact, that was my minor in college and so I taught the four years of math.

I: You had a wide variety. How many children would there be on the average in your class?

GILBERTSON: That would shift as the number of missionaries went on furlough. A few of them had larger families than the others so that affected the class size. There was the time when Miss Kittelsby was on furlough as well as several families, and I think at that time we didn't have but 36 children. But we did have 125 once--not all boarding at school, but we did have between 70 and 80 I know, staying at school.

Some children were from other missions, not all Lutheran, because many were small missions and they couldn't establish a school.

I: What about Christmas vacation? Some of these children came from far away. Would you have to stay at the school with these children?

GILBERTSON: We were there full time, but very few students actually stayed over the holiday. We didn't have any of our own children from our Lutheran missions who couldn't return home at Christmas, but we did have sometimes a few who would live so far west. They would go to different other members of their mission that were near. I **do**, though, remember one time when a student stayed all summer who was from the west, from Kansu Province.

One time when Lillian Landahl and I were going to visit in her home at Fancheng at Christmas, accompanied the students home from that area. I think we had seven with us. It snowed the night before we were to leave by train. When we got to the station where we were to take the bus, we got off; but we were not able to get transportation across the countryside--no bus running because of the snow. So we were stranded, maybe a day or two. We decided that we couldn't be staying there indefinitely, so we had to go on to Hankow first and then to Shekow where we stayed.

We couldn't get transportation from that particular place from which we had to leave for going across country by bus for 17 days, I think it was. So you see, our vacation, though it was three weeks, there wasn't much time left. Only one boy, one high school boy, returned with Lillian Landahl and me. The others stayed for a few days longer.

The students who returned later were unfortunate to be on a bus where a child had smallpox. When these students returned, one girl developed smallpox. We had to call a doctor. We had no doctor there--he was 25 miles away. Dr. Casper Skinsnes came, and he stayed until the girl passed away. He was not able to save her; but he stayed right there at the school. It must have been difficult for him to be away from his hospital in Sinyang, but he gave his time. The parents being so far away were not able to arrive before the child passed away. The mother came after we had put the child in the casket and had sealed it. We had no way of embalming the dead, so the funeral would have to be very soon after the child died.

We didn't have many children that died in our care. In fact, I can't remember but two others. One was Dr. A.W. Edwins' daughter from the Augustana Mission. Annette had scarlet fever, I believe it was. But her parents were quite close so that didn't seem as tragic as in the other case. And then the N. Astrup Larsens lost their only boy when he was perhaps only five years old. They were living on the mountain at that time. Pastor Larsen was the

chairman of our mission, so he was away on deputation when the boy became ill. I think that was scarlet fever, too. So he passed away. Of course, his mother was there and he wasn't staying at our school.

Then another time a boy, Ronald Beckon, drowned, and that was very tragic. That was when we were refugeeing on Kuling. Our principal Palmer Anderson was with the boy at the time for which we were glad. Such a short time after he drowned, a couple of boys from the Kuling American School came down to this valley pool. They could have saved that boy if they had come a little earlier. Palmer Anderson was not able to do it alone. He tried, and the other boys were too small to be of any help.

When that boy drowned, he had his younger brother at school and those parents were far away. They were in Shensi Province, I think, not part of the Lutheran Mission. I think they were of the Scandinavian Alliance Mission. The parents couldn't come for the funeral. So his younger brother, then, was the only mourner. Palmer Anderson, our pastor and principal, went to meet the parents at a certain point later. They came part of the distance, and he went out to meet them and talk with them. It was very hard for them, especially for the mother at that time. But later they had another boy born, and he was sent to our school when he was old enough to go to school. So they felt that the past had sort of been forgotten. That was a tragic event.

I: In one of the letters that you wrote home to your parents, you mentioned about a Chinese girl who had been adopted by Swedish missionaries. Was she a student in the American School?

GILBERTSON: No, no, she was not. They were Swedish people, and I don't know if she went to the China Inland Mission School on the coast or not; but I don't think she even when she was on Kikungshan that summer. She was always wondering about her parents, who her parents were and inquiring if people knew her parents and hoped to meet them someday. She was afraid that her mother possibly had bound feet. She was afraid that when she died she would not be able to go to heaven because she had bound feet. That was a great distress. I think she attended the Chinese school.

I: There was a Chinese school also on Kikungshan, wasn't there?

Gilbertson; Yes, there was a small school down by the church. Our Lutheran United Mission was working in that area and had a stone church built in the valley down by the spring from which all got their water on the hill. We were very happy to have that little school, in being able to try to help them financially with our Sunday offering. It would go to the support of the teacher of the school. It was just a one-room building. We coul hear that school from quite a distance. Students studied aloud in unison.

I: Besides teaching American children you also taught Chinese girls at a government school on Kikung, didn't you? Was that at this time?

GILBERTSON: At one time we had a government school on the mountain--a large one, not the one by the church I mentioned above. The students came from Manchuria at that time, I think. It was some general that was responsible for that group. I suppose there was some disturbance in Manchuria. Their school was in General Chin's property. We had a general who had built up a big compound on the mountain and so there was room for them at that place. There were a few hundred, 200 students--both boys and girls. I had a few of the girls in a class. Usually if they wanted to join a class, we decided if they wanted to learn English, we would use the Bible in helping them. So we read from the Bible. I don't know how much they could have gotten out of it.

It wasn't for such a long time because it was a period when conditions were very disturbed. The government troops were reported to be coming at one time. One of the teachers from the school came over and asked if I could protect those girls, if I could take them in. And I said, "No, we didn't interfere with what the government was doing." Then I realized that they were Communists, and they were afraid of the government sending their troops there to control the

the situation. So they very quickly disappeared and took the train, I guess, to go north again. This was in the 1930s.

The girls came to my home, to the house where I stayed, for the classes. It was on a Sunday that they came. They were not Christian students, so it didn't matter to them whether it was Sunday or not. If I remember correctly, a teacher from the government school taught some of our children Chinese, and he asked if I would teach a class of girls English. They were high school students and weren't too responsive. Since they didn't know much English, I don't suppose that it availed them very much to try to help them because I didn't know the Chinese language. Of course, it isn't always a good idea to be able to speak the language for the other person who is trying to learn the English language. It's best if you can only speak to them in the English language.

I: You mentioned General Chin. What kind of contact did you have with him?

GILBERTSON: General Chin had his headquarters in Sinyang. He was treated for T.B. by Dr. Skinsnes and was very grateful for his recovery and responded with great favors to Dr. Skinsnes. We at the school had no contact with him personally, but he had quite pretentious grounds and buildings on a high point, so it could be seen from quite a distance.

I: During your first year, the fall of 1921, there was an eclipse of the moon on Kikung. What do you remember from that?

GILBERTSON: There was quite a good deal of excitement because of the superstition that is connected with an eclipse. They thought that the dragon was trying to swallow the moon, and drums were beating in order to keep him from doing that. But they thought that sometime he really would swallow the moon. Even our Christian servants thought that was possible.

I: The summer conferences at Kikung were quite a big thing and quite an important part of missionary life.

GILBERTSON: Yes, we used to have a conference for about three weeks. There were many discussions then as to the work--they appealed for workers and gave reports from the different stations. Of course, there was sociability in connection with it at the same time.

I: Did you have speakers from abraod?

GILBERTSON: Not for mission conferences. A few of our mission board at different times came, but very few of them came in those days and not necessarily at conference times. The visitors from the board would go about to the different stations. I think the mission also called a special conference if there was someone who came. Every summer there were at least a couple of conferences: speakers who came from the States. I don't know what the funds were that were used for that purpose. But I suppose there was some foundation here in the States that sent them out and from which the money could be obtained for the speakers who came.

Dr. Tory was one of them one time. Dr. Trumble from Pennsylvania was also there. That was the first summer that I was there that Dr. Trumble was our main speaker. I recall Dr. Jonathan Goforth, a well-known evangelist of the Canadian Presbyterian Mission, was there at the time. Of course, he was a great leader at our mission conferences. He built a large house on the mountain. His son Fred was our student. Dr. Westland, a Swedish professor from Upsala, gave lectures on church history at one point. Dr. Evans from the Los Angeles Bible Institute also came. He was the one that said that women were spoiling it for themselves by trying to take on the work of the men and to want to be equal with the men. He said, "No, the men don't want the women to be their equals; they want them to be their superiors." He said, "I think women are just spoiling it for themselves." Men always want to look up to the women. This was in 1924. I don't recall that his statement aroused a lot of discussion, but I remember it very distinctly. I don't think Dr. Evans referred to the women's work on the mission field per se. These meetings were usually of a Bible Study nature--inspirational.

I: How was this message received? general agreement?

GILBERTSON: Yes.

I: That was before the time of women's lib.

GILBERTSON: Women had a very respected place in the mission. Some wives took on the work of a single person. A few did not and it was entirely optional, depending upon the responsibility in the house. The single women were often the main stay at the station, and often took on a man's job, especially if the man had to take his family to safer areas. Ida Groseth was alone at the mission station and continued to ask for a man to be stationed there, to be in charge.

I: You left for home again in 1925. Was it ill health?

GILBERTSON: No, but I had not been well during that first term following a bout with typhoid fever and malaria, and intestinal disorder, yet teaching every day regardless of how I felt. I never had a substitute, so I was not in a very good physical condition by that time in five years, and it was recommended by our doctor that I should have furlough. Frida Nilsen who had been out a term then was also to return. So the two of us planned to go at least from Shanghai via the Suez, especially for a visit in Norway. So we traveled on a ship that made several stops at important points and arrived at Genoa, Italy. There we had the company of a family from the Philippines on our travels through Italy to Switzerland, and they had two boys, one 14 and the other one 16. Those young boys enjoyed their travels so much, and we enjoyed their company and were sorry to leave the family in Switzerland. Then we went on to Germany and from Munich to

Hamburg and to Denmark. Frida had relatives in Hamburg, too--had a cousin there. We also visited her relatives in Denmark, at a couple of different places. And then on to Norway. So we made several stops on the way.

Then we went on to Bergen and to England and to London and took a little trip down to Maiden Head. The wife of one of the doctors in China, Dr. Odd Ekfelt's wife, had been living there since his death. So we were glad to visit with her one day, and do some sight-seeing. We spent a whole month in Norway. We had quite an interesting time there as the Norwegians are a very hospitable people, and had great interest in foreign missions.

Then we boarded a ship at South Hampton and we stopped at Cherbourg, France, but we could not disembark there. And then we were on our way to New York City. Of course, we were very eager to finally get there after months of travel. I went on to Detroit, Michigan, where my brother was living at the time. Frida and I parted company in New York City.

I: That must have been a fascinating trip with all the stops you made along the way. Was that a freighter then that you were on?

GILBERTSON: Yes. There were many passengers, though. I think it must have been a freighter, a German one. Otherwise there wouldn't have been all those stops along the way. But there were several stewards, and all of them were so musical

that every evening at our dinner we would have orchestra music. And sometimes they even gave extra concerts. Early Sunday morning, they would always give special music, about 7:00 in the morning they would play. It was really unusual, I think. Really quite beautiful classical music. We didn't know of any other kind of music in those days!

I: When you came back to the States, how did you spend your year here?

GILBERTSON: I was hoping that I would recover from some of the intestinal trouble that I had in my first term. And I suppose I somewhat did. The first year I was at home most of the time on the farm at Atwater, west of Minneapolis. Then I went to Bible school in the spring of the following year. The Lutheran Bible School was then located in St. Paul, and I also attended the next full year. My parents were in need of my help at home, too. My father was ill with encephalitis, and it required two of us to be able to help him. He was rather a well-kept man. I decided I better resign. So I did after my first year. Then the following year most of the missionaries came home because the Communists became so strong in China.

I: That was 1927, right?

GILBERTSON: Yes, 1927. They came home and got established in work here at home and didn't return. But there were many of the missionaries who did return the following year and also in 1929, and that's when I returned. 1929 was the first

time there were high school students at the American School after the departure in 1927. They did have school the previous year, in 1928, too, but not on Kikung. There were only younger children that were in school in the grades at that time.

I came back to an empty building. I guess the beds were still there, though, and the furniture. We didn't have any baggage whatsoever. If one had left anything, it had been stolen or looted. I had saved some of my things by bringing them to Hankow. I had bought a large camphor chest at that time--a beautiful chest. I had left that in Hankow with some of my more precious things, the Chinese things. Anyway, I had some things with which to begin the new term. For my second term, I stayed eight years. My parents had both passed away in 1929, in February and in July, so I felt that I would be free to stay as I had no responsibility towards them.

I: During your first term you had often been ill and not so well and there must have been some loneliness and so on. I was wondering how you felt about returning to mission work then after your furlough? What were your feelings and thoughts about returning?

GILBERTSON: It was as if there were a magnet that drew us to the field again. We knew the need, although my work was not with the Chinese people as I hoped that it might be every

time after furlough. I was always needed at the school, so I agreed to return there and always enjoyed it. We did feel the call as a rather permanent call that we should continue for the rest of our lives, as long as we could work. Many of us did. There were circumstances, of course, where people could not plan to return. I still had not entirely recovered from my intestinal troubles. Later when I was in the Japanese internment camp, I was really healed of my troubles so that I could return after the Japanese war and be perfectly well for the few years that I was permitted to work again in China.

I: When you returned in 1929, was there a great deal of talk about the Communists and the movements of the Communists?

GILBERTSON: Yes. We weren't able to stay at our mission station at Kikungshan very long because the Communists and robbers were roving through the territory. There were three of our missionaries who were being held by the Communists, Miss Bergliot Evenson, Rev. K.N. Tvedt,and Rev. Bert Nelson, and we feared for our school children, too. We wouldn't have liked them to be taken and carried along with the large bands. So we went to Hankow at one time after our own missionaries had been taken and stayed for some time and had our school at our seminary 10 miles from Hankow at Shekow. I lived at that time in the same home with some of the other missionaries. Our seminary faculty had to open their homes

to us so that the school could continue to function. We had our class work in the seminary building.

I: Did you return to Kikung again?

GILBERTSON: Oh, yes. We did, but then the countryside was so disturbed because there were a thousand people in these bands that roamed the countryside.

I: Were they bandits that were roaming the countryside?

GILBERTSON: Communists, I guess, and they were really bandits. They would take possession of a city and it was theirs. So we decided that we could not stay, and this time we went to Hankow. It was at the time of the flooding of the Yangtze and the Chinese people were walking the streets with the water up to their armpits almost, carrying whatever they needed to carry on their heads. And they were using boats. There were boat trams. If you went out in a boat, it would take ever so long to get somewhere because there were so many boats on the streets.

We looked for a place to locate our school because we expected it would be for some time that we would have to be there. Though we had the Lutheran Mission Home to stay in, it did not suffice for our school, really, for an extended time. So we planned to cross the Yangtze river. In fact, some of us went across to arrange for this one day. That night the dyke broke so that water came rushing in and occupied those grounds where we expected to have the school. So at once then we had to plan for Kuling, another

resort like Kikung, only 5,000 feet above sea level. It was a much larger resort.

We had to go back to Kikungshan for baggage and supplies. The matron and our principal, Mr. Palmer Anderson, and myself went back to do some packing, taking mattresses for beds and wrapped school supplies and groceries and what not in those mattresses to move to Kuling. We had 300 pieces of baggage at Hankow, and we had to go through customs with this, too. Each province had its customs. We were coming from Honan to Hupeh, and we had to pass customs. We finally boarded a steamer, and I think we traveled about the same distance as from Kikung to Hankow. It was about 110 miles. There, of course, we had to take boats again from the steamer to the mainland because water still flooded the area. The plain was flooded between the river and the mountains. Finally we got to dry land so that we could get chairs to take us up the mountain. With all that luggage, it was quite an undertaking.

We occupied homes, the summer homes of some of the missionaries there at Kuling first. Then we discovered that there was a British school that had been established there for a long time that had closed their doors in 1927, and they hadn't reopened their school. We were able to lease that property and we were very glad that we could really move into a school building. There was already an American school on the mountaintop--Kuling American School. It was an

American school with which we could have competition in athletics especially. Of course, we had other associations with them, too. They were fully as a large a school as we were. In fact, there were more students there than in ours. Kuling was delightful place to live, and it was at that point that we lost our boy who was 12 or 14 years of age at that time.

I: How did all those 300 pieces of baggage come from Kikungshan?

GILBERTSON: By train.

I: By train, and then coolies carrying all these mattresses and other baggage.

GILBERTSON: Yes, and then we had to get a freight car. We couldn't have taken it on a passenger train. We would have to be sure to engage a freight car for it.

I: Was there any particular danger in crossing the river from Hankow to Wuchang during the flood?

GILBERTSON: We were carried down the river a ways, I remember, as we crossed by boat. The current was so fast, but we were fortunate. We were in a sailboat. Our pilot was an old man, so he couldn't manage that boat. But there were two men guiding the boat, so we got across safely. Really, it was difficult--dangerous, I should say. Now the Chinese have built a bridge across, so there is not that trouble crossing that river.

I: When the customs officials examined all your baggage, do you know what it was that they were looking for or they thought they might find?

GILBERTSON: I don't recall, but they couldn't make great searches in all this baggage. The customs men were British; we were not dealing with the Chinese. It was pretty much just a matter of getting permission to get through from one province to another.

I: At the other point of the boundaries between provinces, would it be Chinese customs or would it still be foreign?

GILBERTSON: When we got to Kiangsi, I didn't have anything to do with it that time. I did in Hankow because our principal, Palmer Anderson, was busy with some other affairs that he just had to take care of. So he said, "It's up to you now to get the baggage through customs." I think he took care of it when we got to Kiukiang, and there I think the customs men were Chinese.

I: Who had been the previous principal?

GILBERTSON: That was Rev. Roy Thelander of the Augustana Synod. He was a pastor, but he also acted as principal. Pastor Thelander had gone back with the missionaries in 1927 and didn't return to China.

I: How many children were there in the school at this time of this big move that you made to Kuling?

GILBERTSON: We were quite a large group. Sixty, seventy, I can't say how many there were.

I: On Kuling did you find any great differences having school there as compared to Kikung?

GILBERTSON: We had quite good facilities so that living wasn't too difficult. But there are always difficulties when one has to change from one location to another. It was of interest to know that General Chiang Kai-shek was then located at Kuling. The Communists were also strong in that province, and he had gone to live there and to direct the movements of the troops, trying to get the Communists out of that province. I recall one summer living in an adjoining compound to Chiang Kai-shek. They had guards, of course, at their gates. But there were also guards at our gate because we were so near so that whenever we went out from our house, we had to be ready to respond to the guards when they would say, "Who goes there?" It was interesting to see the general with his bodyguard going for walks. We often followed the guards and walked along. Madame Chiang spoke English as she was educated in the States. She attended our services in the community church.

I: Did you ever have a chance to meet them personally?

GILBERTSON: We didn't make any effort to do so. Madame Chiang would attend our services, but she usually was the first to leave. Not in the summertime when the missionaries

were there. She had friends among them that she would stop to talk to.

I: What was the general attitude toward the Chiangs among the missionaries at that time? Would you explain this situation more fully? What were some of the differences?

GILBERTSON: He was a Christian and they naturally had a great respect for him. He was able to drive the Communists from that province to another province. They went farther north and west into Shensi. I remember very distinctly when we did get back to Kikungshan after we had spent three years at Kuling. We were so far removed from our mission stations and the parents of our Lutheran children that they were eager that we should come back. In the meantime there had been 12 forts erected on our mountainside in that area with 50 troops in the forts day and night, and 500 down at our railway station. That number wasn't sufficient in case the Communists had really come to our area, to the mountain. They took care of us there. It seemed that that was the place where we should be located at the time. We never did have any trouble. It was interesting to watch those military and the orders and the deals that they went through. They were different from what our troops would have been expected to do. I imagined their exercises were of the German type.

I: I have heard sometimes about the difference in behavior between the Communists troops and the National troops when they would come through a city. Were there any rumors of that and news of that that you heard of at that time?

GILBERTSON: The Communists were really not troops. They were just a group of people that government troops were trying to get out of the country, out of control.

I: When you returned to Kikung, how long were you there?

GILBERTSON: I went on furlough in '37 and returned in '38. By then our school had been moved to Hong Kong, so I didn't get back to Kikung for nine years. We were in Hong Kong for three years on an island 10 miles from Hong Kong. Then the situation became much more critical, and all of the British women were ordered out of Hong Kong in the summer of '41. We did get advice, but we still stayed on. When it came to Christmas time and the New Year, we realized the possibility that the Japanese might take over in Hong Kong.

I: Where were you when Pearl Harbor was attacked? Were you on the water at that time?

GILBERTSON: No. The school children left for the U.S. in January of '41. I went to the Philippines to join some of our people who had come to study the Chinese language there instead of Peking because of the political situation. I was

in the Philippines for an entire year, so was in Baguio of the Philippines at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack. The Japanese dropped bombs at Baguio the same time as Pearl Harbor. The Japanese then also came to Baguio and we were taken captive. We were just ready to take our year's examination when we were taken captive. I went there to study Chinese since I had never had the opportunity to go to language school because I still had the inkling to want to work among the Chinese.

I: It's good that you had at least that one year of study.

GILBERTSON: Yes, I enjoyed it. Character study is so fascinating. I thought if I ever retire, I would spend time in reading Chinese. In fact, I am finding there are many more perhaps worthwhile things that I should do instead of studying Chinese. It would be just for amusement. I would never use it now.

I: You mentioned that the British women all left Hong Kong.

GILBERTSON: They went to Australia and the Philippines. Some were in our camp when we were interned in the Philippines.

I: If the American Consul did not give orders, did he give advice to the American school?

GILBERTSON: No, I don't think we were advised to leave, but our matron, Mrs. John Lindell, especially, was very insistent

in closing our school so that we would go back to the United States and would not be interned.

I: Who took the children back then?

GILBERTSON: Gertrude Sovik and the matron. There were some others that had come to live in Hong Kong, too. The other teachers went to Shanghai at that time. How long they stayed, I don't know. I didn't know much about them after I left.

I: Do you have any special recollections of that brief period in Hong Kong? The principal Joseph Aalbue died at the time.

GILBERTSON: Yes, that was very sad. We didn't have a doctor on our island. We went into Hong Kong proper if there was any medical attention needed. I remember we went in with Joseph Aalbue at that time and took the steamer across. I guess it must have taken a couple of hours to get into Hong Kong. He even walked when he should have been carried from the boat to the car to be taken up the peak to St. Mary's hospital. We found out that he not only had dysentery, but he also hadan appendix that had burst so that he had peritonitis and was not able to recover at that time. They had three small children--twin girls that were over a year old and another girl two years old.

I: I would like to concentrate today, Ruth, on your experiences in the Philippines after ASK was closed. That was in January, 1941. Is that correct?

GILBERTSON: Yes.

I: Was it when you left Hong Kong?

GILBERTSON: I had the responsibility of closing the building that we used in Cheung Chau, so it was in February that I left for the Philippines. In fact, I had been told by the steamship company that I could come in any time. I had gotten all the passage for students going to the States. They said,"Whenever you want to leave, come in and we'll give you a place." They were surprised when I came and wanted to leave for Manila in a couple of days. They said, "How are you going to get your vaccination in that time?" "Oh!", I said, "Where do I get it?" They told me and I had about one-half hour to make it there and they rather thought I was in a hurry. I took them at their word and they did give me passage. I guess I had first class passage, but I don't think I paid first class.

I: Two days sounds rather quick to me to get all the closing done at the American School.

GILBERTSON: The closing was all finished. This was when I was through. I came from the island. The cook and his

family came down to the boat to see me as I was leaving. It was exactly like I was leaving my own folks behind. It seemed so sad. There was one student with me who lived in Hong Kong. I was glad of that. She lived in Kowloon, but I was glad I was not alone on the ferry when I went over to Hong Kong.

I: What was your purpose in going to the Philippines?

GILBERTSON: I wanted to study Chinese. I never had that opportunity and I felt that I wanted to learn to speak to the people in whose country I lived. I later realized I had a handicap. I didn't have the keen hearing that I needed for distinguishing tones, so I realized that it was a good thing that I had taught at the American School, instead of being a worker among the Chinese, as I had hoped to be.

I: What institute did you study with in the Philippines?

GILBERTSON: It was called the School of Chinese Studies. It was the school from Peking that had moved to Baguio about the same time I came. This was an established school that I had a chance to attend.

I: Did all the students and teachers come out from Peking with the school?

GILBERTSON: They came with the school.

I: How many students were there then in the school?

GILBERTSON: I think we were about 60. We had such excellent teachers. Our head teacher, Mr. Yeh, was the best teacher I ever had anywhere. He was excellent. He only spoke Chinese. I don't think he knew English or wanted to know because he wanted to present the language. No English was spoken in any class. He had the main class in the morning where we all gathered and he gave us the words that we were to use that day. There would be about 18 or 20 new words which would be acted out by him because he didn't express it in the English language at all. We had to be very attentive and listen and see if we could grasp what he was saying.

Then afterwards we had about three different, successive, small classes in which we would be doing the same things with different teachers. We used those words in sentences which we had supposedly learned. Going from one class to another we would often ask, "What do you think that character meant?" (He would write the character on the board.) I am sure we said very many strange things, but the teachers would never let on that we were mistaken and never laughed at us.

I: Do you remember any of your other teachers?

GILBERTSON: Yes, Mr. Yeh's wife was one of our teachers. A very fine lady, rather quiet and reserved but an excellent teacher. Their daughter was also with them. Then Mr. Yü, Mr. Fish, was one of the teachers. He was a little plump

man with a contagious laugh. We got to see these teachers again after we were interned because they were in the same camp as we were for about one month, I think. At first we were all in one barracks. But then they were moved, so the Chinese were by themselves. We had a double tennis court and after awhile they also permitted the Chinese to share the tennis court. We could get a chance to see them once in awhile. There were 300 Chinese there.

We did see them in Manila, too. I don't know when they went there. Then I know we gave them food. When the American troops came, we were given so much that we couldn't take care of it all. I know we shared with the Chinese when they came to see us.

I: Coming back to your classes, how many hours of class did you have each day?

GILBERTSON: About four hours. We also had studies in Chinese history and geography. I know these classes weren't in the Chinese language, so they must have been taught by Americans. Perhaps our principal might have conducted one of the classes.

I: Who was the principal?

GILBERTSON: Mrs. Hayes, who was the wife of the principal of the school in Peking. Mr. Hayes for some reason had to remain behind so his wife took on the principalship in Baguio. I think they were American Presbyterian missionaries.

I: In your language study, did you also have a chance to learn how to read or write?

GILBERTSON: Yes. It was some time before we were expected to learn characters. We did learn during that time from the middle of February until the first of December about 1000 characters, to write about 1000 characters. Of course, we could read much more. We also had the phonetic script, so we could learn to read from the phonetic. Any portion of scripture, any gospel we could read, but we possibly didn't understand what we were reading when we read in the phonetic. The phonetic has just symbols, not character writing. I think it had 27 symbols. So it was possible to learn to read, but we wouldn't understand what we were reading. It helped us anyway to adjust to the characters.

I: Who were your fellow students?

GILBERTSON: I don't know if there were any others but missionaries. In our group there were 14 Lutheran missionaries. There was one from the Lutheran Brethren and one from the Augustana Synod. There was Pastor and Mrs. Carroll Hinderlie and Pastor and Mrs. Herbert Loddigs and Pastor and Mrs. Herman Larson and Mr. and Mrs. Lerberg. Then we were four girls: Judy Skogerboe and Ruth Jothen and Gladys Anderson and myself. Charles Lerberg was the son of the Lerbergs. He was just in high school, still in high school.

I: While you were studying at the school, did you get to know many Filipino people?

GILBERTSON: We attended the community church so we did get to know them there. Then also at the market; there was a large market place in Baguio. There were many stalls and we got acquainted with some of them through that. We went out to visit the barrios where there were large buildings which were occupied by several families, each one perhaps just having one room. They were government workers in the factories or construction work and such. The government had built up these places for them. We conducted some Sunday School in those buildings and also in some homes. We tried to do a little preaching, too, even in the park. I know our group had been doing quite a bit of that before I came there.

I: You used English?

GILBERTSON: Yes, of course. Most of the adults spoke English. Children, too. At one time there were 1000 teachers sent over by our government, sent over in 1903, but nationalism became strong in that country and later they wanted their own teachers. By the time we came, there weren't too many American teachers left.

I: Do you know how long these 1000 teachers stayed?

GILBERTSON: No, I don't. I know when I was on furlough the first time in 1925, then from Manila we were in the company of a family and he had been a superintendent of schools. I guess he had a couple of thousand teachers under him, but evidently not all Americans. I am sure there must have been many Americans there still then.

I: What was the attitude of the Filipinos toward Americans?

GILBERTSON: They were very, very friendly. In fact, I think they were very friendly people, but I suppose you find that in all places that there are such. I thought they were unusual because we hadn't known them very long when, after we were interned, they sent us fruit and bread and food that we really needed. I was surprised because we hardly knew their names. We would get fruit sent in with our commandant who went in to shop every morning on what we called the Black Maria, a truck. One of our own internee men would go with him, too, so after a bit we were able to get quite a little special food. If we had a little money, we could send for extras. We paid for our food when we got into camp. We paid a certain amount every week so we soon ran out of money. Why we did I never knew. I never asked why we were charged for our food when we were prisoners. Soon there was a possibility of borrowing money from Filipinos through businessmen in the city of Baguio who had connections with the Filipinos who had money. They loaned us quite a sum. They trusted us that they would get

it back and they did, of course.

I: Did you have any other source of money? Were you able to get any in the mail?

GILBERTSON: No, only through these business people. I know one time Mr. Lerberg, who was the treasurer in our group, had received money at the bottom of a syrup can. He just hurriedly divided it up because he heard that there was going to be inspection. That was previous to the time when the Japanese recoginzed that we were getting money. So afterwards they set up a bank for us. We had to deposit our money with them. Then, of course, we were afraid we were going to lose out, but we didn't. We couldn't draw more than 25 dollars each month.

I: I suppose your salaries from the mission didn't come through at this time?

GILBERTSON: No. No money from the mission. We got that afterwards.

I: Were there many Chinese in Baguio?

GILBERTSON: There were 300 in that camp, so I suppose that was about the size of it.

I: Was it a merchant community?

GILBERTSON: They were all merchants, yes. Every town almost would have a shoemaker who was Chinese. All through

the islands in the south I have heard that the Chinese shoemakers were in these places.

I: Did you get acquainted with many Americans, servicemen, for example?

GILBERTSON: There were a number of servicemen who came to Baguio in the fall of '41. We wanted to do something for them. One day when Mr. Lerberg called the base he was questioned quite explicitly as to why we were in the Philippines, what we were doing there, before they would consider sending boys from Minnesota to us. We were inviting them for dinner one evening. There were 24 we entertained that evening for dinner. We had prepared well; besides food, we had games and entertainment.

When it got to be about 11:30, we were running out of games and were wondering what we could to do entertain them. We hadn't expected them to stay that long because when we were at language school, we had to go to bed early in order to be able to have a keen enough mind to get any understanding of what the Chinese teachers were saying. It was about 12:00 o'clock or later when the leader said, "Well, boys, I guess we better be going." Then they went. We also had parties for them.

I: What was Baguio like?

GILBERTSON: It's a very beautiful spot, of course. Mountainous area, high mountains. Very fine buildings put up by the

Americans in the beginning when they took over the Philippines. It was the place where the High Commissioner would be living in the summertime. Thirteen gold mines were there so, of course, the Japanese were very keen on coming up there. We thought they surely won't come up the mountain. I think it was 5,000 feet high. They didn't hesitate. Evidently they knew that they could get the access to the gold mine.

I: Who owned and managed these mines and who did the labor?

GILBERTSON: As to owning, they were American companies. There were British working there, too. The laborers would be the Filipinos, but there were many who were in our camp who were officers in those mines, the Americans and the British.

I: You started language school in February of 1941. Before the year was up, Baguio was attacked?

GILBERTSON: Yes. The same day they attacked Honolulu, we were also bombed in Baguio. That immediately stopped our assembling for classes.

I: I suppose it came as just as much a suprise as Pearl Harbor did?

GILBERTSON: Yes, it was. Most of the bombing was in the daytime, so the Filipinos rushed out of the city in the daytime and came back later in the afternoon, but we never left.

I: What happened to the American troops?

GILBERTSON: They skipped. We didn't know that and we didn't know we had no protection--that they had gone. There were not enough American troops to do any fighting.

I: How long did the bombing last?

GILBERTSON: It was about a month. Not quite, because the army arrived in Baguio about the 28th of December.

I: What kind of Christmas did you have, then?

GILBERTSON: Many people were assembled at Brent School. We girls, the three of us who were living together, went over there also, thinking we better be over there with all the other people. But Lerbergs, also in our apartment, didn't want to go. When it was Christmas Day, or the day before Christmas, we went back so we could spend Christmas Eve with them in our apartment. We had taken with us suitcases and blankets which we left at Brent School. Afterwards we were able to find them. I had two blankets. I could find only one and it was a long time before I could ever find that other one, but I finally did. It seemed all right to take whatever you came across in those days.

I: Why did you leave it at Brent school?

GILBERTSON: We were quite sure that that's where everybody would be interned.

I: Oh, I see. You were expecting to be interned?

GILBERTSON: Yes, of course, we were expecting it. There was so much information. Information is easily spread in the Orient. We knew that in China there were always rumors. For some time we thought they would even arrive earlier than they did. At one time we thought we should assemble at one of the hotels. Then they hit upon this idea of going to the school because there were more buildings there.

I: Whose idea was that, the Japanese?

GILBERTSON: No, the Americans. The Americans decided they better be concentrated at the American school.

I: How long did you wait there at the American school together then?

GILBERTSON: We were still at our apartment. We didn't wait because they came to our apartment. The Japanese army came in on Saturday afternoon and we saw them that night as they were in possession of the cars of the Communists. We saw other people we knew being concentrated some place and we supposed it was the American School.

We spent that night at home. The next morning we thought we would go to church, but a man came to visit the people who occupied the other apartment on our floor and he said, "Oh no." He was a German from Germany. He said, "Don't go out. They'll take you right away and intern you."

So we had a good meal at home; the cook had a special meal for us. We rested a little while, then we decided,"We're going to go to the City Hall to see if we might register with them." There might be a chance they wouldn't intern us if we would register. We had hardly stepped outside of our building when a car drove up and a Chinese man stepped down and ushered us into the car. They had taken over all the cars of the foreigners so there was no shortage of cars for them.

I: Were they coming specifically for you at that time?

GILBERTSON: No, they just happened along the street. They had orders to collect everyone. Then they brought us to Brent School and when we got there, the people had just been moved into one building. Children were crying and mothers were crying. Mrs. Lerberg spoke up and said, "Oh, there's no place for us there." So they opened the building from which they just brought the people. We had one large classroom to ourselves. We were right next to the Japanese soldiers.

Anyway, we spent the night there, about six of us. Our Filipino cook's wife managed to bring us dinner that evening. She said she had to lie to get through the lines, but she said she was determined to bring us some food. When I went out to the garbage can with a little leftovers,

a little Japanese soldier stepped up, and he said, "Don't be afraid. I'll guard you dearly." He surely did. He was flashing his light into our room many times during the night to see that we were all right.

I: Did you meet many friendly guards?

GILBERTSON: No. But we did know two pastors who were in charge of us part of the time who questioned us once when we were released from our internment. When we missionaries had been in a month, they released us. We were home one night, but they decided they couldn't protect us. The Japanese knew they were responsible for protecting us and they couldn't do that if we were scattered here and there throughout Baguio. So right away we were taken back again. We were questioned by these two men before we went back.

TAPE THREE - SIDE TWO

GILBERTSON: I thought about the passage in scripture where it says about the questions, you shouldn't worry about the answer. I surely was praying about it. He said, "Do you promise that you will do nothing to hinder the advance of the Japanese Army?" It was very easy for me to say that I wouldn't because there was no way I could do it. We passed through in a line and then it would be the next one. You never heard what was being said by anyone. We just had one question and that was all. These Japanese pastors

who interviewed us were very kind.

I: How long were you at the American School?

GILBERTSON: I think we were there just overnight. Then the next morning we were assembled and were told we were prisoners of the Japanese Army and were going to be moved to Camp John Hay. If we stepped off the road, we would be shot. We would have to carry with us what we could because they had no assurance we would get what we left behind. The children marched first although they didn't tell why they asked the children to be separated from their parents. What they wanted was the children and the older people to set the pace.

I: Did you receive much harsh treatment from the Japanese?

GILBERTSON: No, not at all, except we were rather frightened at the troops, the soldiers with their guns coming into our barracks at night, walking between where there was so little space for people to walk because we were so crowded. The men in our camp soon told them they must be out of the barracks during the night; they couldn't be marching around at that time of night.

I: How long was this march from Brent School to Camp John Hay?

GILBERTSON: A couple of miles perhaps, but we were carrying so much. We took a sheet and put as much as we could in that sheet and threw it over our shoulders. One girl had seven

dresses on.

I: When you got there to Camp John Hay, did they separate you according to sex?

GILBERTSON: Yes. We were in the same barracks, but we were in either end of the barracks.

I: The children?

GILBERTSON: They stayed with their mothers. It wasn't long until they had the men in another barracks.

I: When they separated them into different barracks, could couples be together?

GILBERTSON: No, they couldn't even visit with one another. Then finally, they decided they could be out on the tennis court and they could march around on the tennis court. I think there was some barrier so that they weren't close to one another. I guess they had to be so far a part or something.

I: These things you brought along with you in your sheets, could you keep them yourselves?

GILBERTSON: Oh, yes. They were our personal clothes mostly.

I: What had been the use of Camp John Hay before hand?

GILBERTSON: It was an American military summer camp for the troops stationed there.

I: Who else was with you in the prison camp?

GILBERTSON: We were about 500 prisoners. Then there were an additional 300 Chinese in an adjoining building.

I: What kinds of people made up these 500 people?

GILBERTSON: We were of all walks, I guess. Most of them business people. We were about 125 missionaries.

I: Were there very many children among the prisoners?

GILBERTSON: Yes. The numbers grew almost daily. There were births because there were so many language school students who were having their first children.

I: Were these births difficult under the circumstances?

GILBERTSON: Yes, it was very difficult. The first birth, I remember, there were two rooms at the end of the barracks. They ordered one emptied so the mother could give birth apart from the rest. Then a hospital finally was set up and they went to the hospital.

I: Were there very many elderly people?

GILBERTSON: Yes, yes. In fact, I had a list here about how many there were in ages.

I: What nationalities were you?

GILBERTSON: Mostly Americans and British, but there were

a few others.

I: Were there many deaths among these elderly people in the concentration camp because of the difficulties?

GILBERTSON: No, there weren't. I think there were nine or eleven deaths or something like that. I think the circumstances were such that death would have happened anyway.

I: Were there any cases of torture?

GILBERTSON: All of the men who were in the language school were questioned by the Japanese authorities at their headquarters and three were retained. Of these three, one was given water treatment. Water was forced into the mouth and rectum and, of course, he didn't live long. He had a wife and small son in camp. She was not told what had happened to her husband. The other two men came back so she might have realized he was no longer living. The other two men had been gone about 11 weeks, I think. I think it was about a year before she really was told he was dead. His name was Rufus Grey and he was from the Baptist Mission.

I: What was their reason for questioning or torturing?

GILBERTSON: They either heard or surmised he had taken many photographs while living in Peking and different places and they thought he was there for propaganda purposes. They thought that of all of us for that matter,

because they couldn't understand why there should be a Chinese language school in the Philippines.

I: I was wondering how many were crowded into the barracks.

GILBERTSON: We were all in one room. We weren't in separate rooms. It was all open beds. It just happened there were two rooms. I suppose those might have been for officers or something at the one end. We had no bedsteads, so we slept on the floor. We soon realized when we came into this empty barracks that those of us who were friends must get together and squat. We would have to have our little place to sleep. We wanted to have a little section where we would be together.

I: Were the toilet facilities adequate?

GILBERTSON: The water supply was cut off. It was very difficult. The men had to start digging ditches. It was normal after we had a water supply, but they said the same situation had been experienced by the Japanese when they were interned a month before we were. We didn't know how they were treated. There were a number of Japanese living in Baguio.

I: Was there any chance for privacy at all?

GILBERTSON: There wasn't enough place for that. We were confined just to the one government tennis court. There were so many people. Three or four did try to get together to have devotions, but they suspected any group that would be together, so it wasn't a good idea.

I: I noticed in one of your letters you had written that you were starting a garden. How did that come about that you could have a garden?

GILBERTSON: They allowed us to have gardens. The men were first to be permitted to raise whatever they wanted--flowers or vegetables or whatever it might be. Then they finally did permit women to go, too, to the garden area. This was removed from the camp. As far as I was concerned, I just wanted to get outside of the camp. I wasn't feeling very well, so I couldn't have prepared a garden, but one of the men did it for me. I raised garlic for one thing. I became very fond of it and thought I would never eat food again without garlic. Then they decided the men had to do some work that would bring more account, so they weren't allowed to go to the gardens. They had to start preparing soil for a sweet potato crop, so I know I brought home many armfuls of flowers. There was one man in particular that had this beautiful flower garden there. He had gotten seeds, I guess, from the Filipinos through the market. Everyone was asking, "Bring me some flowers today." I brought most of them to the hospital to the sick people.

I: Why did you raise garlic?

GILBERTSON: I don't know if at that time I had heard that garlic was very good in regulating blood pressure. I suppose others must have been raising it, too.

I: Did you have a chance to receive mail when you were a prisoner?

GILBERTSON: I was one of three people to get mail from home the first time. That was perhaps in about 1943. Of course, there was plenty of mail that was somewhere, but it wasn't received by us. We did get mail later, too, a few times, but very few people got mail.

I: You were moved a number of times, I think. First of all from the American School to Camp John Hays. Later you were moved again to Camp Holmes, is that correct? How was the move carried out?

GILBERTSON: They had big trucks they took us in. This was about April of 1942.

I: Then about December of '44 you were moved to a prison in Manila?

GILBERTSON: Bilibid Prison. I had once been in Bilibid to see it when I passed through Manila on my first furlough in 1925. Then it was a model prison. Now it had been

condemned. There were cobwebs from the ceiling, vermin, bedbugs. By that time we had gotten mosquito nets from somewhere, so we were able to be clear of them, except we were usually busy cleaning in the morning. They would be in the corner of our nets.

I: How did that compare with Camp Holmes?

GILBERTSON: At Camp Holmes we had bedsteads, double-deckers. Some people were so unique that they hung their beds from the ceiling so that would be separate then from the double bed. They were hanging from the ceiling!

I: How was your treatment in these three camps? Was it comparable?

GILBERTSON: I think it was pretty much so, except at Camp Holmes, of course, we had a good chance to move around a bit. We had acreage there and beautiful flowers which we especially appreciated in the spring of the year, the lilies that were growing about Easter time. It was there that we had the garden.

I: Why did they send you to Camp Holmes and then later on to Manila?

GILBERTSON: The Japanese Army was coming up to Baguio. They were retreating so they had to get us out of the way. I suppose they occupied the quarters we had had up there.

They brought us down to Manila, which was a good thing. When our army came again they could easily be of help to us when they were able to take over.

I: Bilibid Prison was actually in Manila, right?

GILBERTSON: Yes, that's right.

I: And Camp Holmes?

GILBERTSON: It was about six or ten miles from Baguio. Bilibid was right in the middle of Manila. The trip down by trucks from Camp Holmes took almost two days and a night, but that night they didn't have sufficient ammunition to bomb us, so we were free of planes as we were moved down. Of course, their troops were going up the one side of the road as we were going down on the other. That was another reason why they wouldn't want to attack, but we heard they didn't have fuel for the planes.

I: What was the food situation like?

GILBERTSON: When they interned us, they didn't have food for us. They hadn't planned it. The people had brought food from home and also the stores that had freezing units had sent their supplies to Brent. So they had sufficient there. I suppose some of those were brought over to Camp John Hay, too, but they never promised us that we would get what was at Brent School. There was no previous

organization whatever in supplying food for us at Camp John Hay. They just didn't have anything. I remember having a half carrot for a meal. We didn't have water. We had no way to get it. When water was finally brought in after they got it, we didn't have cups with which to drink. We had to borrow from one another if we knew someone who had one.

I: When you did get food, who prepared it?

GILBERTSON: We took care of our own cooking. We had an excellent cook from the Hong Kong Hotel in Hong Kong who happened to be on his way to the States. He was delayed in Manila, so he didn't go any farther. We were fortunate to have that man as the head cook. He would especially like to serve a nice meal sometimes. So for a holiday we would have a good meal. We perhaps wouldn't taste meat for several weeks in order to save it up for these occasions. It was mostly on the hoof.

I: For 500 people they would certainly have to purchase a good deal.

GILBERTSON: It was a large supply that they brought us--vegetables and fruit. Much of it in poor shape, so we had to do a lot of sorting in order to get it ready for a meal. So we spent many hours in vegetable, rice and fruit detail.

I: Now was it certain ones who were appointed to vegetable detail?

GILBERTSON: We could choose pretty much what we wanted to do, but we were expected to work on something. The Japanese had nothing to do with that. That was our own internee government.

I: So the Japanese more or less confined you and guarded you and then the rest was up to yourselves?

GILBERTSON: That's right.

I: Did the cook have a kitchen?

GILBERTSON: It was a regular barracks. Camp John Hay was as we could expect in an American barracks and at CampHolmes there was a good kitchen there, too. That was a Filipino camp.

I: Who seemed to be your leader in organizing the group? Was there any particular leader?

GILBERTSON: I don't know. We perhaps voted about that. I don't recall.

I: What were some of the other duties that a prisoner could do?

GILBERTSON: Some had to go to the hills to chop down trees for the fuel for cooking the food. I guess they must have had just wood for the fuel in the kitchen. There were also a few who made shoes. I heard that they even made a denture for somebody there. So somebody was kind of clever. There were many jobs. Of course, if there was a death, then a coffin had to be made. We would hear them pounding away at that.

I: Were most of the prisoners quite willing to take their share of responsibility?

GILBERTSON: Not at first. Some of them were very, very despondent in the beginning because they had had quite a loss. The missionaries didn't have as much to lose, I think it wasn't so hard for us. But after awhile most everybody took responsibility.

I: What was done if someone tended to shirk? Would any measures be taken to try to get him back into shape?

GILBERTSON: I don't think so because it was just our own affair. We would just try to hope that they would be able to produce something.

I: In one of your letters you mentioned you were fed feed corn in soup and then what was left of the feed corn was ground for meal. You also wrote the corn was treated with lye so that the outer covering comes off and that was really good and filling. That is interesting to me that that should be good.

GILBERTSON: I ate the little tiny fish, too, because I knew it was likely to have some mineral value. I had seen baskets of these where we were living in Hong Kong, but I never thought I would ever eat them. I took other people's share, too, because they refused.

I: You wrote at one time it was hard to make peanut butter. How did you make peanut butter?

GILBERTSON: That was difficult, too. We had only the native bowl and pestle to try to work with, to try to cream the peanuts. The coconut butter, too, was hard to make because it was very difficult in the first place to get the coconut out of the shell and then get it into any creamy condition.

I: Another thing you wrote about food was that after three months without any eggs, Rev. Subido, the Filipino pastor, sent a jar of Coco-butter, which is coconut and brown sugar mixed, a sack of tomatoes and a boiled egg for everyone in your group of 17 with your names on it.

GILBERTSON: Yes, I think that must have been for Easter. I think he sent us coconut butter more than once. He was very kind to us. We also had a milk recipe. There was a Dr. Cunningham who originated it, I guess, so we called it the "Cunningham" milk. It was rice flour, bean flour, sugar, coconut milk (of course, we had to prepare that), calcium hydroxide, and vegetable water from spinich, cabbage or mustard. We also had a bread recipe because we had no bread to speak of. So I have in my diary an account of being served baking powder biscuits one morning which was a surprise to us. As individuals we did make bread. I think we used the yeast from the banana, made yeast from banana. Our bread recipe

included three cups of rice, three cups of corn meal and two tablespoons of casava. Casava is used in special flour for angel food. Two tablespoons of fat, two teaspoons of salt, two level teaspoons of baking powder and a scant teaspoon of soda and a tablespoon of syrup. We said that it would never take the prize because it was rather heavy. We never had wheat or rye or graham flour. A man would take the responsiblity to bake these individual loaves in the oven at night.

I: Where did you get supplies like baking powder and soda?

GILBERTSON: There was usually someone who had brought it in with them or else had permission to go home. Once in awhile someone would get permission to go home. If they hadn't been robbed of everything, they might be able to bring something back. Of course, one day when some of us went home (they permitted us to go), then we brought back some things with us that we thought we might like to make use of. One of the girls in our apartment was able to get into our apartment by having a dental appointment in the same building. While the guard went out, she quickly went up to our apartment and picked up some of our things. This went all right that one time, but the next time she was at the dentist, she got caught. All of a sudden she saw two soldiers standing in the doorway of the entrance to the apartment. She had the presence of mind to inquire if she might take what she had already gathered and they let her take it. When she came to camp

she said, "Pray for me because I got caught and I don't know what will happen." Nothing specially happened to her, but everytime somebody did something wrong, then we were hindered, for instance, from getting bags from the market. We were punished in some way.

I: The whole group would be punished?

GILBERTSON: Yes. That was the sad thing of it if you were the caught person. If letters were received in a bag that brought some produce from the market that some friend sent, then we might be hindered for a long time from getting any bags. One time there was a two-page letter with quite a little information in it that was discovered in that situation. It was evidently information about the military situation.

I: How was the health in general within the camp among the prisoners? There was plenty of malnutrition, dysentery, beriberi?

GILBERTSON: Yes.

I: How were these illnesses handled then?

GILBERTSON: We had a hospital and plenty of doctors and nurses in the beginning; but there were other camps that didn't have a sufficient number, so some were taken from our camp. We were well taken care of if we had only had the medicine. But we had very little. We heard that all the dental supplies had gone to Singapore and, we thought, most of the British have false teeth anyway. I know I filed a

dime so I could get enough silver to fill one of my teeth. We had dentists in internment who brought in some of their equipment.

I: How was your own health in the camp? Did you suffer a great deal from poor health in the camp?

GILBERTSON: Yes, I did. I always worked in a detail of some kind, usually the food and vegetable. Although I had started teaching (I was responsible for fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grades), I had to give that up when I wasn't feeling well. I had beriberi because of eating so much rice and not having enough protein.

TAPE FOUR - SIDE ONE

I: Yesterday evening, we were talking about the health of the prisoners during camp and the occurrence of dysentery and beriberi and malnutrition. There were 10 deaths, I believe, during those few years and 23 births, so actually the population seemed to increase a bit.

GILBERTSON: That's right. The language school students had their first babies. They all lived but one. That was a premature seven-month baby. We had a burial service and he was buried on the American post there.

I: Were you able to receive help from the International Red Cross periodically?

GILBERTSON: There was only one time we got supplies and then

we each got a good-sized box of many different ingredients. Oh, how thankful we were! Those little tins of meat, for instance. We would keep them for about three days or more just eating from them a little bit at a time from those little three-ounce tins. I can see ourselves as we came away from the place where they were delivering them and carrying those. How precious it was to have that box and to open it up to see what was in it when we got back to the barracks.

I: Were there any escapes or any attempted escapes from the camp?

GILBERTSON: There was one man who made plans for that. He asked 12 different women if they would knit him a sock because he was going off stocking-footed, so he could sneak through the barracks without too much noise. He did get away. He was a former soldier. We had some of them with us, too. They found some of them, I think, in the mountains, so they were brought in. He had been in the American military.

I: There must have been some times of relaxation and unexpected little joys during this period. Could you tell about some of those?

GILBERTSON: Most of the people were educated so whatever subject they were most familiar with they were willing to give us their information that they had on stars or on localities where they had visited and also on different subjects. For example, one lady from Japan gave us a flower arrangement course. Many different courses. Speaking of the stars,

I don't know any place where I have seen the heavens so beautiful as there. That was one place where we couldn't be deprived of seeing the heavens. We surely thanked the Lord for that, that we could look up. Living as we did in the mountains, there was always inspiration in looking across to the other ridges, too.

We got to know many interesting people. There was one opera singer in our group who was brought in sometime after the rest of us. She came in with a Beauty Rest mattress and it was the only one in camp, I am sure. Mrs. MacGregor was very free to sing arias for us. She had never been on the stage but had sung with many symphonies. She was released shortly. I don't know if to another camp or what happened. She wasn't with us so very long. She was Spanish, but her husband was a Britisher. He wasn't there. The thing that amused us was that she had such a supply of things that she came with. She had a number of sheets and pillow cases. She never had her clothes washed or never attempted to do that. She would put them away after she used them a little bit and put on another set.

I: That seems incongruous in a prison situation!

GILBERTSON: Washing was a very difficult procedure there. In fact, at first we didn't even have a pail, so we couldn't do anything. Then the water supply was cut off at first. But we managed after awhile and got some lines up, too, I guess, because one time I was washing for another sick lady and it was hard to find space on the line for her things.

As time went on, there were more who would work. So after awhile we started studying Chinese again. Of course, we did a lot of knitting. We were able to get the wool. The Catholics and Episcopalians had schools there so they were well supplied with wool and yarn at their schools. They were able to get that in so that we would purchase it from them when we would get money.

I: What about getting together for worship services?

GILBERTSON: We wouldn't be but two or three together at a time if we were sitting outside on that tennis court. Of course, the men moved out of our barracks very shortly and into another barracks. We were not to associate with the men. After a few weeks they allowed us to associate with the men. We would have to be outside, of course. If they observed us, if the guards saw that there were a few together, they always suspected that we were planning something.

Easter came along. We had the oldest pastor in our group inquire if it would be possible to have a service. It was granted. Early on Easter morning we were up before sunrise. We were dressed in our best clothes that we had laid aside, not to use until we were released. I think there were but a very, very few people who didn't come out to the tennis court and stand at attention as the sun rose over the hill. We sang "Holy, Holy, Holy" and a number of Easter songs. We

As time went on we would get oriented to our surroundings.

I: What about celebrations?

GILBERTSON: We always had special birthday parties. I remember I provided the cake for Maren Hinderlie's birthday one year and it cost me nine dollars for the ingredients. Everything was so expensive. As time went on, it was more and more so. Money didn't have much value.

I: You were able to purchase all the ingredients for the cake?

GILBERTSON: Yes, we could get a cake made. Our leisure hours were spent in reading and in study. We studied many languages. I had a whole notebook full of Greek. We didn't have texts but were able to secure notebooks, so we had to use our notebooks. We had a blackboard so the teacher could use the board. Herbert Loddigs was the one who especially taught Greek from the Epistle of John. When he started to teach Romans, I was no longer in the class. I just felt that was too difficult. I wasn't very well at the time.

French--I have quite a notebook on French. I tried to teach Norwegian to a few of the couples in our mission. We had an excellent library, a library that our American troops had had the use of. I read 1,600 page novels, such that I never would have thought of reading had I not had time to read. I have a notebook with the resume of each book I read. We studied Chinese, too. We didn't at first because we had many other duties since the people weren't all offering their services.

were permitted to have the scripture reading but no sermon. But they recognized that it was all right; evidently the Bible didn't contain anything that was derogatory. I am sure we stood there with tears in our eyes as we tried to sing. There was no occasion like it before or after.

I: I suppose people from various denominations took part?

GILBERTSON: Yes. The program was made out that way so that different missions were represented. I know there were people who hadn't been in church for years--some of the business people who were present that morning. I am sure it is a time they would never forget.

I: I suppose the guards were quite numerous that morning?

GILBERTSON: No, I don't think so. I suppose they were around as usual, but I don't remember that at all.

I: Were you able to meet again after this?

GILBERTSON: Then we didn't have services for about a couple of months, I guess. We kept on asking (I imagine our men did), though. They said we might have a sermon if it would be written out beforehand so that they could go through it and read it. That was the procedure for a little while. After a while we could have as many services as we wanted and they never asked about seeing the sermons. At first, perhaps a

soldier could be present, but we doubted that he would understand very much of what he was hearing. So we had many services and Bible study groups.

I: What rumors did you hear while you were in camp and what news were you able to get?

GILBERTSON: We had many rumors. The news that we got from Yokohama, I believe, said, "Don't believe all that you hear because the Americans and the Dutch are only giving you some unfounded rumors." Then we thought, Well, we're gaining a little. We had such a mistaken idea about warfare. We didn't know of all those islands in the Pacific. We didn't realize that fighting had to go on in all those islands before they even came to the Philippines. We thought that shortly after we had been interned we would be released, that our Navy would be right there. We didn't realize the struggle that there had to be first.

The group didn't have access to the radio. There was one at the guard house. A few of the men would go over there to listen, but, I suppose they didn't have those stations turned on that would give any adverse information.

I: What happened when the American Navy didn't get there as soon as you expected?

GILBERTSON: The time got to be long, but we were so occupied. We kept ourselves very occupied, but there was this thought that we are doing nothing for anybody else and just for ourselves, nothing for our country. That gave us such a

bad feeling that we were hindered in that way. We were hopeful, of course, but it seemed to take much, much too long. We would occasionally see some planes as time went on. The last year, in '44, we would see U.S. planes, especially in the fall. I guess the men would recognize that they were American planes.

I: Was there any regular communication between the prisoners in camp, like a paper, a newsheet or anything like that?

GILBERTSON: No. I don't think we had such, but the Japanese put out a sheet which we couldn't believe or at least we didn't want to believe. I guess they were actual facts. We didn't realize what a struggle it was for our Army and Navy.

I: You had over a 100 children in camp and you mentioned you were in charge of setting up classes for the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth
the old Brent school?

GILBERTSON: Yes, they must have brought them from there and from other grade schools. I recall that at one time they wanted to see our texts. They had to approve them, so they kept them for a little time. Any books that we had, our Bibles and all, were taken, but they were returned to us.

I: Did you have any graduations during that period?

GILBERTSON: No.

I: I think you mentioned there was a wedding?

GILBERTSON: Oh, yes, there was a wedding. A young man and a young lady were married. Unacquainted before, but we had a lovely wedding. When the commandant came home from shopping that day, he brought a nice corsage for the bride, but he also brought a bottle of wine. Our lady interpreter said, "We appreciate much the flowers that you have brought, but we don't feel we should accept the wine." It was like one day we got one piece of candy each at our vegetable detail. That was from the Japanese Army.

I: Why did they do that?

GILBERTSON: For doing our work well. When I think of one piece! But, my, we were glad to get that one piece. We never had sugar.

I: What different reactions were there to the imprisonment? Did anybody get severely emotionally depressed? Were people able to buoy up under the circumstances?

GILBERTSON: Yes. They did pretty well. I suppose there were a few instances.

I: I was thinking particularly of those who had a great deal of material possessions before and had lived in comfort. I suppose it would be difficult for them to adjust?

GILBERTSON: Yes, right. I remember one lady said, "My whole household furnishings amount to about 250,000 dollars." Of course, she lost her home, and all those beautiful cars meant quite a little to many. It wasn't strange they were

feeling depressed.

I: There were some who left early, I think in September of '42, six left of the internees. How did that come about?

GILBERTSON: I guess they took prisoners from all the camps, not only in the Philippines but from other ports. That's why so few would be taken from each camp. Our lady principal, Mrs. Hayes, and her daughter were allowed to go home at that time on the Gripsholm.

I: How was the selection made?

GILBERTSON: I don't know. I don't think those who went from our camp were ill.

I: When were you finally released?

GILBERTSON: It was on February 4, 1945.

I: How was this carried out?

GILBERTSON: In our camp we were fortunate because the Japanese guards walked out. There was no firing in our camp as there was in the large camp at St. Thomas where there were 5000. The American troops fired at the Japanese to get them out, so there were a few killed, but not in our camp. So we ladies had made an American flag earlier in our internment and that was raised immediately. We cried and sang "The Star Spangled Banner." Of course, we couldn't go anywhere.

There was firing outside going on. That was mostly at night and this was in the daytime when we were released. It would have been dangerous to go any place. I suppose the guards were killed as soon as they got outside. Our American machine guns were right near.

I: Did it come as a surprise or were you sort of expecting it?

GILBERTSON: We were told. There was a Japanese officer who came to our interpreter and he said the Americans were a short way off. It did surprise the Japanese because the Americans made three different landings, I think, at different sides of the island of Luzon. The Japanese didn't expect them to come from all different directions.

I: How long was it before you could leave for the States?

GILBERTSON: Oh, we left in April, I think it was the ninth. We got to the States about the fourth of May, I think, because travel was very difficult. Those who were ill were flown home. They didn't know what to do with us single women. They finally decided to send us on some troop ships. We were on an LST. There were submarines around everywhere, so they had to be very careful with the travel. We had blackouts on the way. There was a difficult storm. One time for three days we couldn't be on deck. Everything was swaying back and forth and the furniture had to be tied down.

We were surely glad when we landed at San Pedro, which, I guess, was our port in Los Angeles. We made no stops from Manila. Usually there are stops on the way, but we made no stops whatsoever. We didn't know where we were in the ocean.

I: At the time of your release, were there many who were in severe ill health?

GILBERTSON: There were a few. Right in our prison there had been a few hundred soldiers who had been prisoners there. Many of them were very ill and died because they had corn for feeding us--like hogs almost. They had so little food of any kind for the prisoners toward the end. We ate greens that we never thought of eating before and hadn't seen. Anything, we just had to eat almost anything that was brought whether it looked edible or not. But we did have soya beans and that was a great help, especially for those who could digest soya beans. I had such a very poor digestive tract all the time. Yet after, as I mentioned, I was healed, I could eat any amount of that. Our Adventist friends had pressure cookers, so they were well done. But there was nothing like syrup or sugar or any additional condiment for them. I suppose there was salt, but that would have been all. They weren't too desirable. I gained about a pound a day when the soya beans came in on shipment from Korea.

I: I suppose there was quite a grand welcome for you when you came back to the States?

GILBERTSON: As we walked off the ship, we were treated to doughnuts and coffee. We hadn't seen any doughnuts for years. And, of course, the government provided so well for us in that we could go to shop. We were assigned shops. I've forgotten the name of the shop in Los Angeles; it was the finest shop they had there where I was to spend my 130 dollars. It didn't go very far because everything was so expensive, but I got some nice things. When we were on the train going home, we had a special train. At one stop in Nebraska they were going to serve us cake, but they thought, This is not the train with the refugees on. They're too well-dressed for that. Just as the train was going to pull out, one lady came running and she said, "Oh, here's a cake. We didn't realize that you were the refugees. Won't you share it with the rest in your coach?" We did.

I: How long were you in the States then before you returned to the Orient?

GILBERTSON: It was a year. We came in May and we left again in the latter part of July and went to San Francisco to buy our supplies. We bought some in Minnesota, but they would have to be shipped. We packed right at the dock. They allowed us to do our packing, all our supplies that we got. We had to get a stove and many important larger items, although we never had refrigeration in China.

I: Were you mainly in charge of purchasing this equipment?

GILBERTSON: Yes. Gertrude Sovik and I traveled out to Shanghai together and the two of us worked on that. Then the other teachers came later in the fall.

I: What other preparations did you have to make before returning to open ASK?

GILBERTSON: All the books for our courses. We had to get them mostly from the St. Paul Book and Stationary Store. All through the year it seemed we were preparing for it. We intended to get back in a year's time.

I: So as soon as you were released from concentration camp, you began to plan to go to China?

GILBERTSON: Yes, right away. But I had to do a lot of speaking, many speaking appointments. Sometimes many a week.

I: Did you have any special fears or forebodings now in looking to your return?

GILBERTSON: No. We were eager to be back and eager for the missionaries to be able to return. The opening of ASK was the only way that some of them felt they could go back, if they could have their wives and children with them. When we went after the previous furlough, there were four family men with us and it was very sad for them to have to leave their families. I went off to Hong Kong where our refugee school was, but the rest got off at Shanghai. I don't

think they had visas yet, but they expected to get them.

I: In one letter you mentioned, "Before leaving Minneapolis in 1946 I had to get a statement signed by Ed Ryan, Superintendent of Police, that the files of that department were searched, and that no record of arrest or conviction was found against me," and you needed three copies. Why was that?

GILBERTSON: They were particular about the persons coming into their country.

I: Was this because of the war or was this always the procedure?

GILBERTSON: It had never been required before. We also had to have many more innoculations and vaccinations than we previously had. All spring we were having shots and vaccinations. We went down to Ft. Snelling and received those: typhus and typhoid, cholera, smallpox, yellow fever, the plague, tetnus, malaria. The first time I went I had none. I sailed shortly after knowing that I was going to go because I had to substitute for a teacher. It would have been very well if I had had one for typhoid fever at that time because I had to spend months recuperating.

I: Did you go on a converted troop ship back to China?

GILBERTSON: No, not when we returned to Shanghai. We were on the General Meigs. I don't think it was bad.

I: When you arrived in Shanghai--it was you and Gert Sovik who were traveling together--there was difficulty with the freight?

GILBERTSON: Yes. That was the freight either we had sent from Minneapolis or else that which had to come on our ship. I think it was both. We got the report as soon as we got to Shanghai that there was very little of our freight that could be found. There were so many ships that came into port at that time that they didn't put a load from one ship in a godown, but they would be from two or three ships and it all got confused. So one of the first things that I did then was to get someone to go with me. We had to go up the river to where the freight was. There happened to be a former school board member, Rev. Arthur Nyhus, in Shanghai, who was returning to America. He went with me. I didn't want to be the only woman up there. We walked about and looked for our assignment and did find a few pieces. One was a barrel that was standing outside of one of the warehouses. It was not more than half-full. I said, "I know those are the dishes we ordered." So I said, "I'll have that." And they said, "Oh, you better put in a claim; it's only half-full." I said, "We'll never get any more. It's no use to put in a claim. We might as well take what we have here." And we did. Gertrude went on to Hankow about the time I went to look for the baggage and I came up later on another ship.

I: So you left by boat from Shanghai to Hankow and then by train from Hankow to Sinyang.

GILBERTSON: We went to Sinyang in place of Kikungshan. We could not be on the mountain in the wintertime. We could not secure coal and it was cold there. Sometimes during the past years, one of our men would have to order a freight car and go up to the mine to get the coal to be sure of getting it. We didn't have stoves either for furnishing a dormitory. In Sinyang we could get along with less fuel, although we did use wood there to some extent. But we dressed for the cold weather. It wasn't as cold on the plains as in the mountains. On the train I came across a Chinese who could speak English. I realized he was sitting aways back of me and I could feel someone was eyeing me. Finally he came to talk to me. He could speak English, the only one of the Chinese on the train who could. So he was eager to use the English language. I learned he was the teacher on Kikungshan, the Chinese teacher in the little school that we had up there. Later James Hu was here at Concordia as a student and now he is one of our leaders of the work there in Hong Kong.

TAPE FOUR - SIDE TWO

I: Who was in charge of repairs at West Gate where you opened the school?

GILBERTSON: Edgar Sovik took that on. We saw the buildings and I said, "My, this can never be repaired," because the buildings had not been occupied for about 18 years and many of the soldiers had lived there. There even had been a fire right in the middle of a floor--possibly for their cooking. It was in terrible shape with all its door and window frames gone and rafters coming down. Edgar said, "Oh, yes, it can be repaired," so he repaired two dwellings for us and also an additional one for the school. The logs were brought in from the street and planks were sawed. We watched the procedure as he put the former chapel into use for a workshop. The chapel was a very plain building so it served very well. All our furniture was made right there. Nothing was painted and varnished and we lived very simply. We didn't expect that it would be for very long that we could remain in Honan Province.

I: Even in 1946 you realized you probably would have to flee from the Communists?

GILBERTSON: Yes. It appeared they were coming along.

I: Do you remember any incidents or names that were being mentioned at that time among the Communists?

GILBERTSON: No.

I: The first four students came in October and I think classes opened October 21st?

GILBERTSON: Yes, sometime in late October.

I: And that was on the front porch of one of the buildings, wasn't it?

GILBERTSON: Yes. We had very few children. About eight or nine at first and then they gradually came.

I: I noticed you had written down some of the names of some of the students who came during the year. "In October it began with two Blys and two Lees. Then the Swensons of the Augustana came. Phillip Bly had been staying at home and his mother had been teaching him, but he thought he would like to go to school, too. Then the three Martinsons joined us in January and the Fielders and three Bartels from other missions and the Branstroms. We were a few by the end of the year."

I: What were the co-operating missions at this time?

GILBERTSON: The Covenant and the Lutheran Brethren and the Augustana Synod and ours was called the Lutheran United.

I: Which other missions were represented?

GILBERTSON: At that time it was the Baptists, the Southern Baptists and the Christian Missionary and Alliance.

I: Were you aware of the attitudes that the ASK children had on their arrival in Sinyang? Were they reluctant to leave the United States?

GILBERTSON: I think that it is often the case of the children of the missionaries. They may look forward to an adventure, going somewhere, but when they had been in school in the States, many of them hesitated to get back to the Orient. Then they got accustomed to it and enjoyed the Chinese people and getting to know them.

I: Do you remember any special instances or any special adjustments that were particularly hard for them to make?

GILBERTSON: I suppose they didn't have the opportunities in athletics, especially that year. But previously when we were on Kikungshan we had basketball; we had the Swedish School to compete with in athletics. That was a deficiency pretty much.

I: How did you provide for Sunday worship and Sunday School during this time?

GILBERTSON: We did have a pastor, Earl Dahlstrom. At first we attended the Chinese church with the children. Then we decided we better have a service for them at the school because it was kind of tedious for them to sit when it was difficult to understand the sermon or take part in the service. It's different than just talking to people on the streets. The children didn't have enough Chinese right then to be able to appreciate sitting in a service. The Chinese services were always longer than ours by a good deal.

I: What were the offerings used for at this time?

GILBERTSON: We organized a school right on the compound. There was a small building that had two classrooms, enough to get 16 desks in, eight in each room. And they sat two and three at a desk. There was a door between so that the teacher could supervise them from one room to another. There was only one teacher. She was a very conscientious girl. They were well-disciplined. They never came running over to our building and they marched out to the gate as they left. They did come over if we invited them as a group, but otherwise they stayed by themselves. They were there early in the morning, 7:30 about, and school continued until late afternoon. They used notebooks for their work and she had those to correct and she worked into the night.

I: Who was the teacher?

GILBERTSON: I don't remember her name now. She was a high school graduate possibly and from a Christian background.

I: You said, "We organized it." Who was that?

GILBERTSON: Gert and I planned it. We were the only ones there in charge of the school.

I: Oh, so this was entirely sponsored by ASK then?

GILBERTSON: Yes.

I: And all their financial support came from ASK at that time?

GILBERTSON: Yes.

I: The school must have had to close when ASK left?

GILBERTSON: I suppose they did. I don't know what happened. But the situation in Sinyang was rather difficult toward the last. It was like an army camp. The Communists were in the area, so perhaps they weren't able to carry on. Many of the people left Sinyang which they had done, too, during the Japanese War. It was more the Communist trouble now. But at the time of the Japanese War, they fled to the west. The city was rather vacant when we returned. There were people living here and there, but it was not crowded as before.

I: What was the need for this school? If this school had not been organized would the children have been able to go to a government school?

GILBERTSON: I don't think so. Their schools were very few. Children didn't have much opportunity for school. I suppose they did have, but it would be just those who could afford to pay a certain amount.

I: In one letter you mentioned, "As the ASK students studied in one room in the evening the servants and the neighbors were gathered in an adjoining room with a folding door between. They were gathered for Bible study and for singing and prayer." I thought that was interesting. Who lead these Bible studies?

GILBERTSON: The gateman did. He wasn't an educated fellow, but he loved his Bible and knew it well. He was the leader. There was one of our servants particularly, too, who was very interested. You could find him reading his Bible when he had a little extra time.

I: Where did the gateman learn to read?

GILBERTSON: He must have been at school a little bit, but he didn't seem like an educated person. We encouraged them to get together in this fashion. Our children didn't seem to mind. They seemed to be able to study and they could hear them in the next room. They didn't pay very much attention to them.

I: Were you able to learn much from the Chinese in the compound of their experiences during the war?

GILBERTSON: Gertrude might have; but I couldn't speak so well, though I had been in language school. I still hadn't gotten too much of the language so that I could converse readily. Gertrude grew up in China.

I: Had any of them gone west to Chungking and then returned?

GILBERTSON: I don't know. I don't think so. I think they had just gone off and left for their homes. You see their homes often were far away; 100 miles they might be from home. They would hear of this place that they would get a chance to

work and they would come regardless of how far. They would leave their families. They hardly ever brought families with them, but we encouraged them to bring their families. The cook's wife was there. I can still see her now with her two teeth. She had never been in the home of a foreigner so she thought it was heavenly in our place. It was so simple; it was just like a very, very primitive place. She thought it was heavenly compared to their little one-room houses with thatched roofs that were pretty simple.

I: Were there ever any tense moments or conflicts that arose between the Chinese in the community and the ASK students?

GILBERTSON: I don't think so. I can't remember any. The students had respect for the Chinese and Chinese children.

I: You were principal of ASK at this time. What new responsibilities did you have of the American School besides being a teacher? You were also principal before in 1938-1941.

GILBERTSON: I was acting principal. We never did get a principal until later when we were in Hong Kong. Oh, I suppose the health of the students was a part of my responsibility, too. If there was any illness we had to depend upon the Chinese doctor at first. Then finally, Dr. Skinsnes returned from America. Everyone was looking forward to that. The Chinese had big signs put up, welcoming him. When he came, we didn't have to depend upon the Chinese doctor anymore.

Dr. Skinsnes would come through and he was very busy at the hospital. He would make a point to come when someone was ill.

I: How were decisions made? What was your role in making them, such as the closing of ASK or the moving of the school?

GILBERTSON: We were not supposed to be operating in the fall of the year at Sinyang. The Board had wanted us to leave for Hankow. We had such a nice location there at the West Gate. It was spacious, the grounds were spacious, and we could walk into the countryside from there. We had lived in Hankow previously and we knew how it was to live only in a building and have no park near to go to. In Hankow there was plenty of space in the outskirts. But that was special. We would have to be with the children out there and that took considerable time. So we didn't look forward to moving down to Hankow and to being in our Lutheran Mission Home.

The Lutheran Mission Home was a six-story building, but it was built right off the sidewalk. There was no place for the children to be outside there--just inside. We hoped we could still continue. The faculty were opposed to leaving Sinyang, so we didn't go that fall.

The Communists were so near. When they finally cut off the railroad, then we knew that we would have to leave. We were glad that the railroad got repaired sufficiently. We got a car and were able to take all our beds with us and move with our other equipment, some of it. We thought we better have beds. We had brought those from the States when we came out in '46. So we took those with us. We had to stay in

Hankow for a few weeks until we could get permission to enter Hong Kong because we had to be assured of a dwelling place there. Dan Nelson was the one who was instrumental in suggesting that we go to Hong Kong rather than to Shanghai because the Lutheran World Federation had previously given 8,000 dollars for repair of the blind home there.

We wondered how it would be in a home with the blind people. There was much repair that had been done. That was still going on while we were there. We couln't be in Hankow any longer after we knew we had a place in Hong Kong because the children would be more free in Hong Kong. Yet we carried on our classes with all this going on.

We found that it was possible to live with the blind when they returned. They had left the building during the war because it was occupied by British soldiers. They were in their part of the building, but they also served us. They did the cleaning in the building in our school rooms and in our rest rooms. It was remarkable to see what the blind could do. It was interesting to watch what some of them did, crocheting; they did some extensive knitting of sweaters in many colours. We enjoyed their fellowship in singing. We could sing whatever language we knew and they would sing in Chinese the same song.

I: They were very musical, weren't they?

GILBERTSON: Very musical. Their voices were so ethereal as though they weren't in this world. They even played games. We were outside and had games together, especially Sunday

evenings. We would sit and watch the sunset. We could watch the sunset which they couldn't enjoy. There were such beautiful sunsets, looking across the South China Sea, which was just dotted with islands. It was such a beautiful view, especially at night when the fishing boats were out. It looked like there was another village across from us. It was perhaps the most beautiful location. It was lovely and we hated to have to leave that place.

We would go down to the beach with the children. When we were on Cheung Chau, we didn't have to be with the children so much. When they went swimming, we could let them be alone. But we couldn't in Hong Kong. We didn't have a good beach right there so we went with them because they couldn't swim out so far. There was a tendency for them to want to go farther than they should. It was a steep ascent. It wasn't easy to make the trip.

I: May I go back just a bit to Sinyang days again. When you were principal, you probably had quite a bit of communication with Rev. George Holm, who was chairman of the LUM mission at that time.

GILBERTSON: Yes. I wrote the business letters and I was treasurer.

I: There must have been problems being treasurer, especially beyond your duties as teacher and principal?

GILBERTSON: And all the buying of the vegetables at first. Taking care of all the small figures in coppers, and inflation was getting very bad.

I: I remember I saw in one of your records where you had paid 5,000 dollars for one breakfast and 4,000 dollars to send one parcel to the States. I guess the cook received 65,000 dollars a month and the second cook, 60,000 dollars and two other servants 45,000 dollars.

GILBERTSON: Yes, we had to deal in big denominations like that. The exchange was very bad. I remember that it was so long until we got our beds. Then it was some million, two or three million, that we should have to pay for the freight coming up the Yangtze river to Hankow. We wondered whether we should really accept them or let them be confiscated because it seemed so much to pay. But we needed them.

I: How did you make your money exchange at the bank?

GILBERTSON: We would have a Chinese who would tend to that.

I: Mrs. Selma Lindell was to be matron at this time, but she was delayed because she was refused a passport at first.

GILBERTSON: Information had to be very definite at the time. We had expected we finally would be at Kikungshan, but we never got there again for the school and remained in Sinyang. Mrs. Lindell didn't come until we were in Hong Kong. It was an easier matter to get into a British colony.

I: You spent the summer of 1947 on Kikungshan, I think.

GILBERTSON: Yes. Edgar Sovik put our dormitory into shape so that people who wanted to come to Kikungshan could have a place to go because practically all the homes had been somewhat destroyed. There were a few who had been up there to rehabilitate their own places, but very few. So the dorm was open to the public to live there. Our classroom building had burned and I suppose the community assembly hall, too. I can't remember, but I imagine we just had services in our little church where we had first met when we got out there.

I: Were there special needs that stood out as very important for ASK?

GILBERTSON: A great need was for that of a principal. I felt inadequate for the position and we wanted a man to be in charge. We felt that was necessary when we were compelled to move about so much. The last year in '49, we did have a principal. Orvis Hanson had been at Peking then the previous year and he came to take over for which we were very happy. We also needed a lower grade teacher and I think that Dorothy Eckstrand came from the States and was with us at least a year. She had asked to be working with the Chinese people so she left us at the end of that year in '48. We were hoping for big things, like a science teacher and we also wanted a nurse. Miss Shirley was at her station. She had been with us before, but she had taken over the work of her sister and brother-

in-law. I don't think she ever came to be with us, I am not sure. Of course, we needed science equipment and a piano. We had the use of the piano in the Blind Home, when we got to Hong Kong. If we were going to be at the school on Kikungshan, we had to have the heating system put in order. Many things we were looking forward to, far beyond what happened because we had to move away to Hong Kong. Many of these needs were finally filled then when ASK had moved to Hong Kong in early 1948. School officially closed after graduation in 1949 and I returned at that time to the U.S.A.

I: I want to thank you very much, Ruth, for these interviews that you have given us and all the information that you helped us with.